ESSAYS ON THE GITA

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FIRST SERIES

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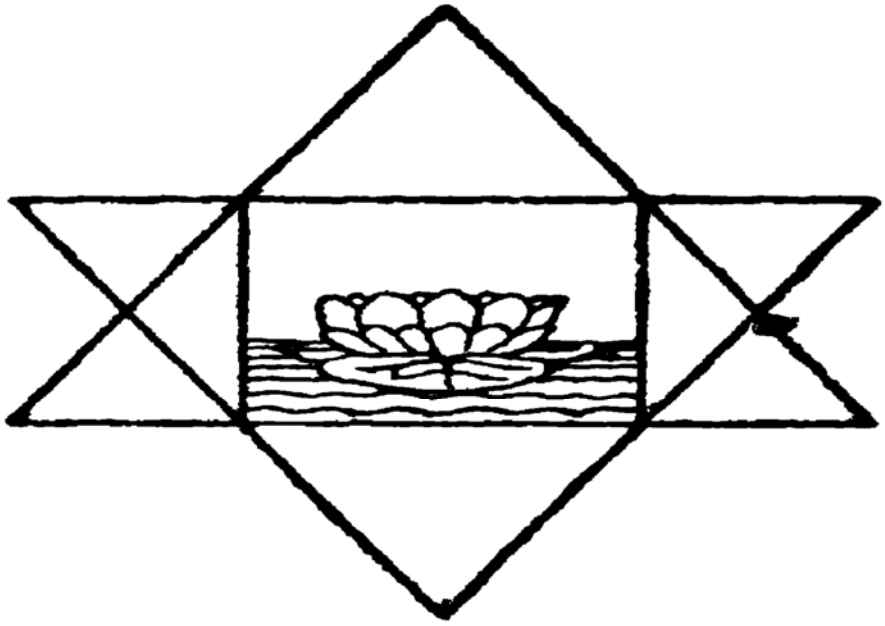

ESSAYS ON THE GITA

OUR DEMAND AND NEED FROM THE GITA

THE world abounds with scriptures sacred and profane, with revelations and half-revelations, with religions and philosophies, sects and schools and systems. To these the many minds of a half-ripe knowledge or no knowledge at all attach themselves with exclusiveness and passion and will have it that this or the other book is alone the eternal Word of God and all others are either impostures or at best imperfectly inspired, that this or that philosophy is the last word of the reasoning intellect and other systems are either errors or saved only by such partial truth in them as links them to the one true philosophical cult. Even the discoveries of physical Science have been elevated into a creed and in its name religion and spirituality banned as ignorance and superstition, philosophy as frippery and moonshine. And to these bigoted exclusions and vain wranglings even the wise have often lent themselves, misled by some spirit of darkness that has mingled with their light and overshadowed it with some cloud of intellectual egoism or spiritual pride. Mankind seems now indeed inclined to grow a little modester and wiser; we no longer slay our fellows in the name of God's truth or because they have

minds differently trained or differently constituted from ours; we are less ready to curse and revile our neighbour because he is wicked or presumptuous enough to differ from us in opinion; we are ready even to admit that Truth is everywhere and cannot be our sole monopoly; we are beginning to look at other religions and philosophies for the truth and help they contain and no longer merely in order to damn them as false or criticise what we conceive to be their errors. But we are still apt to declare that our truth gives us *the* supreme knowledge which other religions or philosophies have missed or only imperfectly grasped so that they deal either with subsidiary and inferior aspects of the truth of things or can merely prepare less evolved minds for the heights to which we have arrived. And we are still prone to force upon ourselves or others the whole sacred mass of the book or gospel we admire, insisting that all shall be accepted as eternally valid truth and no iota or underline or diäeresis denied its part of the plenary inspiration.

It may therefore be useful in approaching an ancient Scripture, such as the Veda, Upanishads or Gita to indicate precisely the spirit in which we approach it and what exactly we think we may derive from it that is of value to humanity and its future. First of all, there is undoubtedly a Truth one and eternal which we are seeking, from which all other truth derives, by the light of which all other truth finds its right place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely

for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever by any one teacher, thinker, prophet or Avatar. Nor has it been wholly found by us if our view of it necessitates the intolerant exclusion of the truth underlying other systems; for when we reject passionately, we mean simply that we cannot appreciate and explain. Secondly, this Truth, though it is one and eternal, expresses itself in Time and through the mind of man; therefore every Scripture must necessarily contain two elements, one temporary, perishable, belonging to the ideas of the period and country in which it was produced, the other eternal and imperishable and applicable in all ages and countries. Moreover, in the statement of the Truth the actual form given to it, the system and arrangement, the metaphysical and intellectual mould, the precise expression used must be largely subject to the mutations of Time and cease to have the same force; for the human intellect modifies itself always; continually dividing and putting together it is obliged to shift its divisions continually and to rearrange its syntheses; it is always leaving old expression and symbol for new or, if it uses the old, it so changes its connotation or at least its exact content and association that we can never be quite sure of understanding an ancient book of this kind precisely in the sense and spirit it bore to its contemporaries. What is of entirely

permanent value is that which besides being universal has been experienced, lived and seen with a higher than the intellectual vision.

I hold it therefore of small importance to extract from the Gita its exact metaphysical connotation as it was understood by the men of the time,—even if that were accurately possible. That it is not possible, is shown by the divergence of the original commentaries which have been and are still being written upon it; for they all agree in each disagreeing with all the others, each finds in the Gita its own system of metaphysics and trend of religious thought. Nor will even the most painstaking and disinterested scholarship and the most luminous theories of the historical development of Indian philosophy save us from inevitable error. But what we can do with profit is to seek in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from their metaphysical form, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression we can find that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity. No doubt in this attempt we may mix a good deal of error born of our own individuality and of the ideas in which we live, as did greater men before us, but if we steep ourselves in the spirit of this great Scripture and, above all, if we have tried to live in that spirit, we may be sure of finding in it as much real truth as we are capable of receiving as well as the spiritual influence and actual help

that, personally, we were intended to derive from it. And that is after all what Scriptures were written to give; the rest is academical disputation or theological dogma. Only those Scriptures, religions, philosophies which can be thus constantly renewed, relived, their stuff of permanent truth constantly reshaped and developed in the inner thought and spiritual experience of a developing humanity, continue to be of living importance to mankind. The rest remain as monuments of the past, but have no actual force or vital impulse for the future.

In the Gita there is very little that is merely local or temporal and its spirit is so large, profound and universal that even this little can easily be universalised without the sense of the teaching suffering any diminution or violation; rather by giving an ampler scope to it than belonged to the country and epoch, the teaching gains in depth, truth and power. Often indeed the Gita itself suggests the wider scope that can in this way be given to an idea in itself local or limited. Thus it dwells on the ancient Indian system and idea of sacrifice as an interchange between gods and men,—a system and idea which have long been practically obsolete in India itself and are no longer real to the general human mind; but we find here a sense so entirely subtle, figurative and symbolic given to the word "sacrifice" and the conception of the gods is so little local or mythological, so entirely cosmic and philosophical that we can easily accept both as expressive of a practical fact of psychology and

'general law of Nature and so apply them to the modern conceptions of interchange between life and life and of ethical sacrifice and self-giving as to widen and deepen these and cast over them a more spiritual aspect and the light of a profounder and more far-reaching Truth. Equally the idea of action according to the Shastra, the fourfold order of society, the allusion to the relative position of the four orders or the comparative spiritual disabilities of Shudras and women seem at first sight local and temporal, and, if they are too much pressed in their literal sense, narrow so much at least of the teaching, deprive it of its universality and spiritual depth and limit its validity for mankind at large. But if we look behind to the spirit and sense and not at the local name and temporal institution, we see that here too the sense is deep and true and the spirit philosophical, spiritual and universal. By Shastra we perceive that the Gita means the law imposed on itself by humanity as a substitute for the purely egoistic action of the natural unregenerate man and a control on his tendency to seek in the satisfaction of his desire the standard and aim of his life. We see too that the fourfold order of society is merely the concrete form of a spiritual truth which is itself independent of the form; it rests on the conception of right works as a rightly ordered expression of the nature of the individual being through whom the work is done, that nature assigning him his line and scope in life according to his inborn quality and his self-

expressive function. Since this is the spirit in which the Gita advances its most local and particular instances, we are justified in pursuing always the same principle and looking always for the deeper general truth which is sure to underlie whatever seems at first sight merely local and of the time. For we shall find always that the deeper truth and principle is implied in the grain of the thought even when it is not expressly stated in its language.

Nor shall we deal in any other spirit with the element of philosophical dogma or religious creed which either enters into the Gita or hangs about it owing to its use of the philosophical terms and religious symbols current at the time. When the Gita speaks of Sankhya and Yoga, we shall not discuss beyond the limits of what is just essential for our statement, the relations of the Sankhya of the Gita with its one Purusha and strong Vedantic colouring to the non-theistic or "atheistic" Sankhya that has come down to us bringing with it its scheme of many Purushas and one Prakriti, nor of the Yoga of the Gita, many-sided, subtle, rich and flexible to the theistic doctrine and the fixed, scientific, rigorously defined and graded system of the Yoga of Patanjali. In the Gita the Sankhya and Yoga are evidently only two convergent parts of the same Vedantic truth or rather two concurrent ways of approaching its realisation, the one philosophical, intellectual, analytic, the other intuitional, devotional, practical, ethical, synthetic, reaching knowledge through experience. The Gita recognises no

real difference in their teachings. Still less need we discuss the theories which regard the Gita as the fruit of some particular religious system or tradition. Its teaching is universal whatever may have been its origins.

The philosophical system of the Gita, its arrangement of truth, is not that part of its teaching which is the most vital, profound, eternally durable; but most of the material of which the system is composed, the principal ideas suggestive and penetrating which are woven into its complex harmony, are eternally valuable and valid; for they are not merely the luminous ideas or striking speculations of a philosophic intellect, but rather enduring truths of spiritual experience. verifiable facts of our highest psychological possibilities which no attempt to read deeply the mystery of existence can afford to neglect. Whatever the system may be, it is not, as the commentators strive to make it, framed or intended to support any exclusive school of philosophical thought or to put forward predominantly the claims of any one form of Yoga. The language of the Gita, the structure of thought, the combination and balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of a sectarian teacher nor to the spirit of a rigorous analytical dialectics cutting off one angle of the truth to exclude all the others; but rather there is a wide, undulating, encircling movement of ideas which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind and a rich synthetic experience. This is one of those great syntheses in which Indian spirituality has been as

rich as in its creation of the more intensive, exclusive movements of knowledge and religious realisation that follow out with an absolute concentration one clue, one path to its extreme issues. It does not cleave asunder, but reconciles and unifies.

The thought of the Gita is not pure Monism although it sees in one unchanging, pure, eternal Self the foundation of all cosmic existence, nor Mayavada although it speaks of the Maya of the three modes of Prakriti omnipresent in the created world; nor is it qualified Monism although it places in the One his eternal supreme Prakriti manifested in the form of the Jiva and lays most stress on dwelling in God rather than dissolution as the supreme state of spiritual consciousness; nor is it Sankhya although it explains the created world by the double principle of Purusha and Prakriti; nor is it Vaishnava Theism although it presents to us Krishna, who is the Avatara of Vishnu according to the Puranas, as the supreme Deity and allows no essential difference nor any actual superiority of the status of the indefinable relationless Brahman over that of this Lord of beings who is the Master of the universe and the Friend of all creatures. Like the earlier spiritual synthesis of the Upanishads this later synthesis at once spiritual and intellectual avoids naturally every such rigid determination as would injure its universal comprehensiveness. Its aim is precisely the opposite to that of the polemist commentators who found this Scripture established as one of the three highest Vedantic authorities and attempted to turn it into a

weapon of offence and defence against other schools and systems. The Gita is not a weapon for dialectical warfare ; it is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives us embraces all the provinces of that supreme region. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls or hedges to confine our vision.

There have been other syntheses in the long history of Indian thought. We start with the Vedic synthesis of the psychological being of man in its highest flights and widest rangings of divine knowledge, power, joy, life and glory with the cosmic existence of the gods, pursued behind the symbols of the material universe into those superior planes which are hidden from the physical sense and the material mentality. The crown of this synthesis was in the experience of the Vedic Rishis something divine, transcendent and blissful in whose unity the increasing soul of man and the eternal divine fullness of the cosmic godheads meet perfectly and fulfil themselves. The Upanishads take up this crowning experience of the earlier seers and make it their starting point for a high and profound synthesis of spiritual knowledge ; they draw together into a great harmony all that had been seen and experienced by the inspired and liberated knowers of the Eternal throughout a great and fruitful period of spiritual seeking. The Gita starts from this Vedantic synthesis and upon the basis of its essential ideas builds another harmony of the three great means and powers, Love, Knowledge and Works, through which

the soul of man can directly approach and cast itself into the Eternal. There is yet another, the Tantric,* which though less subtle and spiritually profound, is even more bold and forceful than the synthesis of the Gita,—for it seizes even upon the obstacles to the spiritual life and compels them to become the means for a richer spiritual conquest and enables us to embrace the whole of Life in our divine scope as the Lila† of the Divine ; and in some directions it is more immediately rich and fruitful, for it brings forward into the foreground along with divine knowledge, divine works and an enriched devotion of divine Love, the secrets also of the Hatha and Raja Yogas, the use of the body and of mental askesis for the opening up of the divine life on all its planes, to which the Gita gives only a passing and perfunctory attention. Moreover it grasps at that idea of the divine perfectibility of man, possessed by the Vedic Rishis but thrown into the background by the intermediate ages, which is destined to fill so large a place in any future synthesis of human thought, experience and aspiration.

We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. We are not called upon to be orthodox Vedantins of any of the three schools or Tantrics or to adhere to one of the theistic religions of the past or to entrench ourselves within

* All the Puranic tradition, it must be remembered, draws the richness of its contents from the Tantra.

† The cosmic Play.

the four corners of the teaching of the Gita. That would be to limit ourselves and to attempt to create our spiritual life out of the being, knowledge and nature of others, of the men of the past, instead of building it out of our own being and potentialities. We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future. A mass of new material is flowing into us; we have not only to assimilate the influences of the great theistic religions of India and of the world and a recovered sense of the meaning of Buddhism, but to take full account of the potent though limited revelations of modern knowledge and seeking; and, beyond that, the remote and dateless past which seemed to be dead is returning upon us with an effulgence of many luminous secrets long lost to the consciousness of mankind but now breaking out again from behind the veil. All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis; a fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains is both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the future. But just as the past syntheses have taken those which preceded them for their starting-point, so also must that of the future, to be on firm ground, proceed from what the great bodies of realised spiritual thought and experience in the past have given. Among them the Gita takes a most important place.

Our object, then, in studying the Gita will not be a scholastic or academical scrutiny of its thought, nor to place its philosophy in the history of metaphysical speculation, nor shall we deal with it

in the manner of the analytical dialectician. We approach it for help and light and our aim must be to distinguish its essential and living message, that in it on which humanity has to seize for its perfection and its highest spiritual welfare.

II

THE DIVINE TEACHER

THE peculiarity of the Gita among the great religious books of the world is that it does not stand apart as a work by itself, the fruit of the spiritual life of a creative personality like Christ, Mahomed or Buddha or of an epoch of pure spiritual searching like the Veda and Upanishads, but is given as an episode in an epic history of nations and their wars and men and their deeds and arises out of a critical moment in the soul of one of its leading personages face to face with the crowning action of his life, a work terrible, violent and sanguinary, at the point when he must either recoil from it altogether or carry it through to its inexorable completion. It matters little whether or no, as modern criticism supposes, the Gita is a later composition inserted into the mass of the Mahabharata by its author in order to invest its teaching with the authority and popularity of the great national epic. There seem to me to be strong grounds against this supposition for which, besides, the evidence, extrinsic or internal, is in the last degree scanty and insufficient. But even if it be sound, there remains the fact that the author has not only taken pains to interweave his work inextricably into the vast

web of the larger poem, but is careful again and again to remind us of the situation from which the teaching has arisen; he returns to it prominently, not only at the end, but in the middle of his profoundest philosophical disquisitions. We must accept the insistence of the author and give its full importance to this recurrent preoccupation of the Teacher and the disciple. The teaching of the Gita must therefore be regarded not merely in the light of a general spiritual philosophy or ethical doctrine, but as bearing upon a practical crisis in the application of ethics and spirituality to human life. For what that crisis stands, what is the significance of the battle of Kurukshetra and its effect on Arjuna's inner being, we have first to determine if we would grasp the central drift of the ideas of the Gita.

Very obviously a great body of the profoundest teaching cannot be built round an ordinary occurrence which has no gulfs of deep suggestion and hazardous difficulty behind its superficial and outward aspects and can be governed well enough by the ordinary everyday standards of thought and action. There are indeed three things in the Gita which are spiritually significant, almost symbolic, typical of the profoundest relations and problems of the spiritual life and of human existence at its roots; they are the divine personality of the Teacher, his characteristic relations with his disciple and the occasion of his teaching. The teacher is God himself descended into humanity; the disciple is

the first, as we might say in modern language, the representative man of his age, closest friend and chosen instrument of the Avatar, his protagonist in an immense work and struggle the secret purpose of which is unknown to the actors in it, known only to the incarnate Godhead who guides it all from behind the veil of his unfathomable mind of knowledge; the occasion is the violent crisis of that work and struggle at the moment when the anguish and moral difficulty and blind violence of its apparent movements forces itself with the shock of a visible revelation on the mind of its representative man and raises the whole question of the meaning of God in the world and the goal and drift and sense of human life and conduct.

India has from ancient times held strongly a belief in the reality of the Avatara, the descent into form, the revelation of the Godhead in humanity. In the West this belief has never really stamped itself upon the mind because it has been presented through exoteric Christianity as a theological dogma without any roots in the reason and general consciousness and attitude towards life. But in India it has grown up and persisted as a logical outcome of the Vedantic view of life and taken firm root in the consciousness of the race. All existence is a manifestation of God because He is the only existence and nothing can be except as either a real figuring or else a figment of that one reality. Therefore every conscious being is in part or in some way a descent of the Infinite into the

apparent finiteness of name and form. But it is a veiled manifestation and there is a gradation between the supreme being* of the Divine and the consciousness shrouded partly or wholly by ignorance of self in the finite. The conscious embodied soul† is the spark of the divine Fire and that soul in man opens out to self-knowledge as it develops out of ignorance of self into self-being. The Divine also, pouring itself into the forms of the cosmic existence, is revealed ordinarily in an efflorescence of its powers, in energies and magnitudes of its knowledge, love, joy, developed force of being,‡ in degrees and faces of its divinity. But when the divine Consciousness and Power, taking upon itself the human form and the human mode of action, possesses it not only by powers and magnitudes, by degrees and outward faces of itself but out of its eternal self-knowledge, when the Unborn knows itself and acts in the frame of the mental being and the appearance of birth, that is the height of the conditioned manifestation; it is the full and conscious descent of the Godhead, it is the Avatara.

The Vaishnava form of Vedantism which has laid most stress upon this conception expresses the relation of God in man to man in God by the double figure of Nara-Narayana, associated historically with the origin of a religious school very similar in its doctrines to the teaching of the Gita. Nara is the

* *Para bhâva.*

† *Dehi.* ‡ *Vibhûti.*

human soul which, eternal companion of the Divine, finds itself only when it awakens to that companionship and begins, as the Gita would say, to live in God. Narayana is the divine Soul always present in our humanity, the secret guide, friend and helper of the human being, the "Lord who abides within the heart of creatures" of the Gita; when within us the veil of that secret sanctuary is withdrawn and man speaks face to face with God, hears the divine voice, receives the divine light, acts in the divine power, then becomes possible the supreme uplifting of the embodied human conscious-being into the unborn and eternal. He becomes capable of that dwelling in God and giving up of his whole consciousness into the Divine which the Gita upholds as the best or highest secret of things, *uttamam rahasyam*. When this eternal divine Consciousness always present in every human being, this God in man, takes possession partly* or wholly of the human consciousness and becomes in visible human shape the guide, teacher, leader of the world, not as those who living in their humanity yet feel something of the power or light or love of the divine Gnosis informing and conducting them, but out of that divine Gnosis itself, direct from its central force and plenitude, then we have the manifest Avatar. The inner Divinity is the eternal Avatar in man;

* Chaitanya, the Avatar of Nadiya, is said to have been thus partly or occasionally occupied by the divine Consciousness and Power.

the human manifestation is its sign and development in the external world.

When we thus understand the conception of Avatarhood, we see that whether for the fundamental teaching of the Gita, our present subject, or for spiritual life generally the external aspect has only a secondary importance. Such controversies as the one that has raged in Europe over the historicity of Christ, would seem to a spiritually-minded Indian largely a waste of time ; he would concede to it a considerable historical, but hardly any religious importance ; for what does it matter in the end whether a Jesus son of the carpenter Joseph was actually born in Nazareth or Bethlehem, lived and taught and was done to death on a real or trumped-up charge of sedition, so long as we can know by spiritual experience the inner Christ, live uplifted in the light of his teaching and escape from the yoke of the natural Law by that atonement of man with God of which the crucifixion is the symbol? If the Christ, God made man, lives within our spiritual being, it would seem to matter little whether or not a son of Mary physically lived and suffered and died in Judea. So too the Krishna who matters to us is the eternal incarnation of the Divine and not the historical teacher and leader of men.

In seeking the kernel of the thought of the Gita we need, therefore, only concern ourselves with the spiritual significance of the human-divine Krishna of the Mahabharata who is presented to us as the teacher of Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurukshetra.

The historical Krishna, no doubt, existed. We meet the name first in the Chhandogya Upanishad where all we can gather about him is that he was well known in spiritual tradition as a knower of the Brahman, so well known indeed in his personality and the circumstances of his life that it was sufficient to refer to him by the name of his mother as Krishna son of Devaki for all to understand who was meant. In the same Upanishad we find mention of King Dhritarashtra son of Vichitravirya, and since tradition associated the two together so closely that they are both of them leading personages in the action of the Mahabharata, we may fairly conclude that they were actually contemporaries and that the epic is to a great extent dealing with historical characters and in the war of Kurukshetra with a historical occurrence imprinted firmly on the memory of the race. We know too that Krishna and Arjuna were the object of religious worship in the pre-Christian centuries; and there is some reason to suppose that they were so in connection with a religious and philosophical tradition from which the Gita may have gathered many of its elements and even the foundation of its synthesis of knowledge, devotion and works, and perhaps also that the human Krishna was the founder, restorer or at the least one of the early teachers of this school. The Gita may well in spite of its later form represent the outcome in Indian thought of the teaching of Krishna and the connection of that teaching with the historical Krishna, with Arjuna and with the war of Kurukshetra may

be something more than a dramatic fiction. In the Mahabharata Krishna is represented both as the historical character and the Avatar ; his worship and Avatarhood must therefore have been well established by the time—apparently from the fifth to the first centuries B.C.—when the old story and poem or epic tradition of the Bharatas took its present form. There is a hint also in the poem of the story or legend of the Avatar's early life in Vrindavan which, as developed by the Puranas into an intense and powerful spiritual symbol, has exercised so profound an influence on the religious mind of India. We have also in the Harivansha an account of the life of Krishna, very evidently full of legends, which perhaps formed the basis of the Puranic accounts.

But all this, though of considerable historical importance, has none whatever for our present purpose. We are concerned only with the figure of the divine Teacher as it is presented to us in the Gita and with the Power for which it there stands in the spiritual illumination of the human being. The Gita accepts the human Avatarhood ; for the Lord speaks of the repeated, the constant* manifestation of the Divine in humanity, when He the eternal Unborn assumes by his Maya, by the power of the infinite Consciousness to clothe itself apparently in finite forms, the conditions of becoming which we call birth. But it is not this upon which stress is laid, but on the transcendent, the cosmic and the

* *bahûni me vyatîtâni janmâni....sambhavâmi yuge yuge.*

internal Divine ; it is on the Source of all things and the Master of all and on the Godhead secret in man. It is this internal divinity who is meant when the Gita speaks of the doer of violent Asuric austerities troubling the God within or of the sin of those who despise the Divine lodged in the human body or of the same Godhead destroying our ignorance by the blazing lamp of knowledge. It is then the eternal Avatar, this God in man, the divine Consciousness always present in the human being who manifested in a visible form speaks to the human soul in the Gita, illumines the meaning of life and the secret of divine action and gives it the light of the divine knowledge and guidance and the assuring and fortifying word of the Master of existence in the hour when it comes face to face with the painful mystery of the world. This is what the Indian religious consciousness seeks to make near to itself in whatever form, whether in the symbolic human image it enshrines in its temples or in the worship of its Avatars or in the devotion to the human Guru through whom the voice of the one world-Teacher makes itself heard. Through these it strives to awaken to that inner voice, unveil that form of the Formless and stand face to face with that manifest divine Power, Love and Knowledge.

Secondly, there is the typical, almost the symbolic significance of the human Krishna who stands behind the great action of the Mahabharata, not as its hero, but as its secret centre and hidden guide. That action is the action of a whole world of men

and nations, some of whom have come as helpers of an effort and result by which they do not personally profit, and to these he is a leader, some as its opponents and to them he also is an opponent, the baffler of their designs and their slayer and he seems even to some of them an instigator of all evil and destroyer of their old order and familiar world and secure conventions of virtue and good ; some are representatives of that which has to be fulfilled and to them he is counseller, helper, friend. Where the action pursues its natural course or the doers of the work have to suffer at the hands of its enemies and undergo the ordeals which prepare them for mastery, the Avatar is unseen or appears only for occasional comfort and aid, but at every crisis his hand is felt, yet in such a way that all imagine themselves to be the protagonists and even Arjuna, his nearest friend and chief instrument, does not perceive that he is an instrument and has to confess at last that all the while he did not really know his divine Friend. He has received counsel from his wisdom, help from his power, has loved and been loved, has even adored wihout understanding his divine nature ; but he has been guided like all others through his own egoism and the counsel, help and direction have been given in the language and received by the thoughts of the Ignorance. Until the moment when all has been pushed to the terrible issue of the struggle on the field of Kurukshetra and the Avatar stands at last, still not as fighter, but as the charioteer in the battle-car which carries the destiny of the fight, he has not

revealed Himself even to those whom he has chosen.

Thus the figure of Krishna becomes, as it were, the symbol of the divine dealings with humanity. Through our egoism and ignorance we are moved, thinking that we are the doers of the work, vaunting of ourselves as the real causes of the result, and that which moves us we see only occasionally as some vague or even some human and earthly fountain of knowledge, aspiration, force, some Principle or Light or Power which we acknowledge and adore without knowing what it is until the occasion arises that forces us to stand arrested before the Veil. And the action in which this divine figure moves is the whole wide action of man in life, not merely the inner life, but all this obscure course of the world which we can judge only by the twilight of the human reason as it opens up dimly before our uncertain advance the little span in front. This is the distinguishing feature of the Gita that it is the culmination of such an action which gives rise to its teaching and assigns that prominence and bold relief to the gospel of works which it enunciates with an emphasis and force we do not find in other Indian Scriptures. Not only in the Gita, but in other passages of the Mahabharata we meet with Krishna declaring emphatically the necessity of action, but it is here that he reveals its secret and the divinity behind our works.

The symbolic companionship of Arjuna and Krishna, the human and the divine soul, is expressed elsewhere in Indian thought, in the heavenward

journey of Indra and Kutsa seated in one chariot, in the figure of the two birds upon one tree in the Upanishad, in the twin figures of Nara and Narayana, the seers who do *tapasyā* together for the knowledge. But in all three it is the idea of the divine knowledge in which, as the Gita says, all action culminates that is in view; here it is instead the action which leads to that knowledge and in which the divine Knower figures himself. Arjuna and Krishna, this human and this divine, stand together not as seers in the peaceful hermitage of meditation, but as fighter and holder of the reins in the clamorous field, in the midst of the hurtling shafts, in the chariot of battle. The Teacher of the Gita is therefore not only the God in man who unveils himself in the word of knowledge, but the God in man who moves our whole world of action, by and for whom all our humanity exists and struggles and labours, towards whom all human life travels and progresses. He is the secret Master of works and sacrifice and the Friend of the human peoples.

III

THE HUMAN DISCIPLE

SUCH then is the divine Teacher of the Gita, the eternal Avatar, the Divine who has descended into the human consciousness, the Lord seated within the heart of all beings, He who guides from behind the veil all our thought and action and heart's seeking even as He directs from behind the veil of visible and sensible forms and forces and tendencies the great universal action of the world which He has manifested in His own being. All the strife of our upward endeavour and seeking finds its culmination and ceases in a satisfied fulfilment when we can rend the veil and get behind our apparent self to this real Self, can realise our whole being in this true Lord of our being, can give up our personality to and into this one real Person, merge our ever-dispersed and ever-converging mental activities into His plenary light, offer up our errant and struggling will and energies into His vast, luminous and undivided Will, at once renounce and satisfy all our dissipated outward-moving desires and emotions in the plenitude of His self-existent Bliss. This is the world-Teacher of whose eternal knowledge all other highest teaching is but the various reflection and

partial word, this the Voice to which the hearing of our soul has to awaken.

Arjuna, the disciple who receives this initiation on the battle-field, is a counterpart of this conception; he is the type of the struggling human soul who has not yet received the knowledge, but has grown fit to receive it by action in the world in a close companionship and an increasing nearness to the higher and divine Self in humanity. There is a method of explaining the Gita in which not only this episode but the whole Mahabharata is turned into an allegory of the inner life and has nothing to do with our outward human life and action, but only with the battles of the soul and the powers that strive within us for possession. That is a view which the general character and the actual language of the epic does not justify and, if pressed, would turn the straightforward philosophical language of the Gita into a constant, laborious and somewhat puerile mystification. The language of the Veda and part at least of the Puranas is plainly symbolic, full of figures and concrete representations of things that lie behind the veil, but the Gita is written in plain terms and professes to solve the great ethical and spiritual difficulties which the life of man raises, and it will not do to go behind this plain language and thought and wrest them to the service of our fancy. But there is this much of truth in the view, that the setting of the doctrine though not symbolical, is certainly typical, as indeed the setting of such a discourse as the Gita must necessarily be if

it is to have any relation at all with that which it frames. Arjuna, as we have seen, is the representative man of a great world-struggle and divinely-guided movement of men and nations; in the Gita he typifies the human soul of action brought face to face through that action in its highest and most violent crisis with the problem of human life and its apparent incompatibility with the spiritual state or even with a purely ethical ideal of perfection.

Arjuna is the fighter in the chariot with the divine Krishna as his charioteer. In the Veda also we have this image of the human soul and the divine riding in one chariot through a great battle to the goal of a high-aspiring effort. But there it is a pure figure and symbol. The Divine is there Indra, the Master of the World of Light and Immortality, the power of divine knowledge which descends to the aid of the human seeker battling with the sons of falsehood, darkness, limitation, mortality; the battle is with spiritual enemies who bar the way to the higher world of our being; and the goal is that plane of vast being resplendent with the light of the supreme Truth and uplifted to the conscious immortality of the perfected soul, of which Indra is the master. The human soul is Kutsa, he who constantly seeks the seer-knowledge, as his name implies, and he is the son of Arjuna or Arjuni, the White One, child of Switra the White Mother; he is, that is to say, the sattwic or purified and light-filled soul which is open to the unbroken glories of the divine knowledge. And when the

chariot reaches the end of its journey, the own home of Indra, the human Kutsa has grown into such an exact likeness of his divine companion that he can only be distinguished by Sachi, the wife of Indra, because she is "truth conscious". The parable is evidently of the inner life of man ; it is a figure of the human growing into the likeness of the eternal divine by the increasing illumination of Knowledge. But the Gita starts from action and Arjuna is the man of action and not of knowledge, the fighter, never the seer or the thinker.

From the beginning of the Gita this characteristic temperament of the disciple is clearly indicated and it is maintained throughout. It becomes first evident in the manner in which he is awakened to the sense of what he is doing, the great slaughter of which he is to be the chief instrument, in the thoughts which immediately rise in him, in the standpoint and the psychological motives which make him recoil from the whole terrible catastrophe. They are not the thoughts, the standpoint, the motives of a philosophical or even of a deeply reflective mind or a spiritual temperament confronted with the same or a similar problem. They are those, as we might say, of the practical or the pragmatic man, the emotional, sensational, moral and intelligent human being not habituated to profound and original reflection or any sounding of the depths, accustomed rather to high but fixed standards of thought and action and a confident treading through all vicissitudes and difficulties, who

now finds all his standards failing him and all the basis of his confidence in himself and his life shorn away from under him at a single stroke. That is the nature of the crisis which he undergoes.

Arjuna is, in the language of the Gita, a man subject to the action of the three gunas or modes of the Nature-Force and habituated to move unquestioningly in that field, like the generality of men. He justifies his name only in being so far pure and sattwic as to be governed by high and clear principles and impulses and habitually control his lower nature by the noblest Law which he knows. He is not of a violent Asuric disposition, not the slave of his passions, but has been trained to a high calm and self-control, to an unswerving performance of his duties and firm obedience to the best principles of the time and society in which he has lived and the religion and ethics to which he has been brought up. He is egoistic like other men, but with the purer or sattwic egoism which regards the moral law and society and the claims of others and not only or predominantly his own interests, desires and passions. He has lived and guided himself by the Shastra, the moral and social code. The thought which preoccupies him, the standard which he obeys is the *dharma,* that collective Indian conception of the religious, social and moral rule of conduct, and especially the rule of the station and function to which he belongs, he the Kshatriya, the high-minded, self-governed, chivalrous prince and warrior and leader of Aryan

men. Following always this rule, conscious of virtue and right dealing he has travelled so far and finds suddenly that it has led him to become the protagonist of a terrific and unparalleled slaughter, a monstrous civil war involving all the cultured Aryan nations which must lead to the complete destruction of the flower of their manhood and threatens their ordered civilisation with chaos and collapse.

It is typical again of the pragmatic man that it is through his sensations that he awakens to the meaning of his action. He has asked his friend and charioteer to place him between the two armies, not with any profounder idea, but with the proud intention of viewing and looking in the face these myriads of the champions of unrighteousness whom he has to meet and conquer and slay "in this holiday of fight" so that the right may prevail. It is as he gazes that the revelation of the meaning of a civil and domestic war comes home to him, a war in which not only men of the same race, the same nation, the same clan, but those of the same family and household stand upon opposite sides. All whom the social man holds most dear and sacred, he must meet as enemies and slay,—the worshipped teacher and preceptor, the old friend, comrade and companion in arms, grandsires, uncles, those who stood in the relation to him of father, of son, of grandson, connections by blood and connections by marriage,—all these social ties have to be cut asunder by the sword. It is not that he did not

know these things before, but he has never realised it all ; obsessed by his claims and wrongs and by the principles of his life, the struggle for the right, the duty of the Kshatriya to protect justice and the law and fight and beat down injustice and lawless violence, he has neither thought out deeply nor felt it in his heart and at the core of his life. And now it is shown to his vision by the divine charioteer, placed sensationally before his eyes, and comes home to him like a blow delivered at the very centre of his sensational, vital and emotional being.

The first result is a violent sensational and physical crisis which produces a disgust of the action and its material objects and of life itself. He rejects the vital aim pursued by egoistic humanity in its action,—happiness and enjoyment; he rejects the vital aim of the Kshatriya, victory and rule and power and the government of men. What after all is this fight for justice when reduced to its practical terms, but just this, a fight for the interests of himself, his brothers and his party, for possession and enjoyment and rule? But at such a cost these things are not worth having. For they are of no value in themselves, but only as a means to the right maintenance of social and national life and it is these very aims that in the person of his kin and his race he is about to destroy. And then comes the cry of the emotions. These are they for whose sake life and happiness are desired, our "own people". Who would consent to slay these for the sake of all the earth, or even for the kingdom of the

three worlds? What pleasure can there be in life, what happiness, what satisfaction in oneself after such a deed? The whole thing is a dreadful sin, —*for now the moral sense awakens to justify the* revolt of the sensations and the emotions. It is a sin, there is no right nor justice in mutual slaughter; especially are those who are to be slain the natural objects of reverence and of love, those without whom one would not care to live, and to violate these sacred feelings can be no virtue, can be nothing but a heinous crime. Granted that the offence, the aggression, the first sin, the crimes of greed and selfish passion which have brought things to such a pass came from the other side ; yet armed resistance to wrong under such circumstances would be itself a sin and crime worse than theirs because they are blinded by passion and unconscious of guilt, while on this side it would be with a clear sense of guilt that the sin would be committed. And for what? For the maintenance of family morality, of the social law and the law of the nation? These are the very standards that will be destroyed by this civil war; the family itself will be brought to the point of annihilation, corruption of morals and loss of the purity of race will be engendered, the eternal laws of the race and moral law of the family will be destroyed. Ruin of the race, the collapse of its high traditions, ethical degradation and hell for the authors of such a crime, these are the only practical results possible of this monstrous civil strife. "Therefore," cries Arjuna, casting down the divine

bow and inexhaustible quiver given to him by the gods for that tremendous hour, "It is more for my welfare that the sons of Dhritarashtra armed should slay me unarmed and unresisting. I will not fight."

The character of this inner crisis is therefore not the questioning of the thinker; it is not a recoil from the appearances of life and a turning of the eye inward in search of the truth of things, the real meaning of existence and a solution or an escape from the dark riddle of the world. It is the sensational, emotional and moral revolt of the man hitherto satisfied with action and its current standards who finds himself cast by them into a hideous chaos where they are in violent conflict with each other and with themselves and there is no moral standing-ground left, nothing to lay hold of and walk by, no *dharma*.* That for the soul of action in the mental being is the worst possible crisis, failure and overthrow. The revolt itself is the most elemental and simple possible; sensationally, the elemental feeling of horror, pity and disgust; vitally, the loss of attraction and faith in the recognised and familiar objects of action and aims of life; emotionally, the recoil of the ordinary feelings of social man, affection, reverence, desire of a common happiness and satisfaction, from a stern duty outraging them all; morally, the elementary sense of sin and hell and rejection of "blood-stained

* *Dharma* means literally that which one lays hold of and which holds things together, the law, the norm, the rule of nature, action and life.

enjoyments"; practically, the sense that the standards of action have led to a result which destroys the practical aims of action. But the whole upshot is that all-embracing inner bankruptcy which Arjuna expresses when he says that his whole conscious being, not the thought alone but heart and vital desires and all, are utterly bewildered and can find nowhere the *dharma,* nowhere any valid law of action. For this alone he takes refuge as a disciple with Krishna; give me, he practically asks, that which I have lost, a true law, a clear rule of action, a path by which I can again confidently walk. He does not ask for the secret of life or of the world, the meaning and purpose of it all, but for a *dharma.*

Yet it is precisely this secret for which he does not ask, or at least so much of the knowledge as is necessary to lead him into a higher life, to which the divine Teacher intends to lead this disciple; for he means him to give up all *dharmas* except the one broad and vast rule of living consciously in the Divine and acting from that consciousness. Therefore after testing the completeness of his revolt from the ordinary standards of conduct, he proceeds to tell him much that has to do with the state of the soul, but nothing of any outward rule of action. He must be equal in soul, abandon the desire of the fruits of work, rise above his intellectual notions of sin and virtue, live and act in Yoga wih a mind in Samadhi, firmly fixed, that is to say, in the Divine alone. Arjuna is not satisfied: he wishes to know

how the change to this state will affect the outward action of the man, what result it will have on his speech, his movements, his state, what difference it will make in this acting, living human being. Krishna persists merely in enlarging upon the ideas he has already brought forward, on the soul-state behind the action, not on the action itself. It is the fixed anchoring of the intelligence in a state of desireless equality that is the one thing needed. Arjuna breaks out impatiently,—for here is no rule of conduct such as he sought, but rather, as it seems to him, the negation of all action,—"If thou holdest the intelligence to be greater than action, why then dost thou appoint me to an action terrible in its nature? Thou bewilderest my understanding with a mingled word: speak one thing decisively by which I can attain to what is the best." It is always the pragmatic man who has no value for metaphysical thought or for the inner life except when they help him to his one demand, a *dharma*, a law of life in the world or, if need be, of leaving the world; for that too is a decisive action which he can understand. But to live and act in the world, yet be above it, this is a "mingled" and confusing word the sense of which he has no patience to grasp.

The rest of Arjuna's questions and utterances proceed from the same temperament and character. When he is told that once the soul-state is assured there need be no apparent change in the action, he must act always by the law of his nature, even if the act itself seem faulty and deficient compared

with that of another law than his own, he is troubled. The nature! but what of this sense of sin in the action with which he is preoccupied? is it not this very nature which drives men as if by force and even against their better will into sin and guilt? His practical intelligence is baffled by Krishna's assertion that it was he who in ancient times revealed to Vivasvan this Yoga, since lost, which he is now again revealing to Arjuna, and by his demand for an explanation he provokes the famous and oft-quoted statement of Avatarhood and its mundane purpose. He is again perplexed by the words in which Krishna continues to reconcile action and renunciation of action and asks once again for a decisive statement of that which is the best and highest, not this "mingled" word. When he realises fully the nature of the Yoga which he is bidden to embrace, his pragmatic nature accustomed to act from mental will and preference and desire is appalled by its difficulty and he asks what is the end of the soul which attempts and fails, whether it does not lose both this life of human activity and thought and emotion which it has left behind and the Brahmic consciousness to which it aspires and falling from both perish like a dissolving cloud?

When his doubts and perplexities are resolved and he knows that it is the Divine which must be his law, he aims again and always at such clear and decisive knowledge as will guide him practically to this source and this rule of his future action. How

is the Divine to be distinguished among the various states of being which constitute our ordinary experience? What are the great manifestations of its self-energy in the world in which he can recognise and realise it by meditation? May he not see even now the divine cosmic Form of That which is actually speaking to him through the veil of the human mind and body? And his last questions demand a clear distinction between renunciation of works and this subtler renunciation he is asked to prefer; the actual difference between Purusha and Prakriti, the Field and the Knower of the Field, so important for the practice of desireless action under the drive of the divine Will; and finally a clear statement of the practical operations and results of the three modes of Prakriti which he is bidden to surmount.

To such a disciple the Teacher of the Gita gives his divine teaching. He seizes him at a moment of his psychological development by egoistic action when all the mental, moral, emotional values of the ordinary egoistic and social life of man have collapsed in a sudden bankruptcy, and he has to lift him up out of this lower life into a higher consciousness, out of ignorant attachment to action into that which transcends, yet originates and orders action, out of ego into Self, out of life in mind, vitality and body into that higher nature beyond mind which is the status of the Divine. He has at the same time to give him that for which he asks and for which he is inspired to seek by the guidance

within him, a new Law of life and action high above the insufficient rule of the ordinary human existence with its endless conflicts and oppositions, perplexities and illusory certainties, a higher Law by which the soul shall be free from this bondage of works and yet powerful to act and conquer in the vast liberty of its divine being. For the action must be performed, the world must fulfil its cycles and the soul of the human being must not turn back in ignorance from the work it is here to do. The whole course of the teaching of the Gita is determined and directed, even in its widest wheelings, towards the fulfilment of these three objects.

IV

THE CORE OF THE TEACHING

We know the divine Teacher, we see the human disciple ; it remains to form a clear conception of the doctrine. A clear conception fastening upon the essential idea, the central heart of the teaching is especially necessary here because the Gita with its rich and many-sided thought, its synthetical grasp of different aspects of the spiritual life and the fluent winding motion of its argument lends itself, even more than other scriptures, to one-sided misrepresentations born of a partisan intellectuality. The unconscious or half-conscious wresting of fact and word and idea to suit a preconceived notion or the doctrine or principle of one's preference is recognised by Indian logicians as one of the most fruitful sources of fallacy ; and it is perhaps the one which it is most difficult for even the most conscientious thinker to avoid. For the human reason is incapable of always playing the detective upon itself in this respect; it is its very nature to seize upon some partial conclusion, idea, principle, become its partisan and make it the key to all truth, and it has an infinite faculty of doubling upon itself so as to avoid detecting in its operations this necessary and cherished weakness. The Gita lends

itself easily to this kind of error, because it is easy, by throwing particular emphasis on one of its aspects or even on some salient and emphatic text and putting all the rest of the eighteen chapters into the background or making them a subordinate and auxiliary teaching, to turn it into a partisan of our own doctrine or dogma.

Thus, there are those who make the Gita teach, not works at all, but a discipline of preparation for renouncing life and works: the indifferent performance of prescribed actions or of whatever task may lie ready to the hands, becomes the means, the discipline; the final renunciation of life and works is the sole real object. It is quite easy to justify this view by citations from the book and by a certain arrangement of stress in following out its argument, especially if we shut our eyes to the peculiar way in which it uses such word as *sannyâsa*, renunciation; but it is quite impossible to persist in this view on an impartial reading in face of the continual assertion to the very end that action should be preferred to inaction and that superiority lies with the true, the inner renunciation of desire by equality and the giving up of works to the supreme Purusha.

Others again speak of the Gita as if the doctrine of devotion were its whole teaching and put in the background its monistic elements and the high place it gives to quietistic immergence in the one self of all. And undoubtedly its emphasis on devotion, its insistence on the aspect of the Divine

as Lord and Purusha and its doctrine of the Purushottama, the Supreme Being, who is superior both to the mutable Being and to the Immutable and who is what in His relation to the world we know as God, are the most striking and among the most vital elements of the Gita. Still, this Lord is the Self in whom all knowledge culminates and the Master of sacrifice to whom all works lead as well as the Lord of Love into whose being the heart of devotion enters, and the Gita preserves a perfectly equal balance, emphasising now knowledge, now works, now devotion, but for the purposes of the immediate trend of the thought, not with any absolute separate preference of one over the others. He in whom all three meet and become one, He is the Supreme Being, the Purushottama.

But at the present day, since in fact the modern mind began to recognise and deal at all with the Gita, the tendency is to subordinate its elements of knowledge and devotion, to take advantage of its continual insistence on action and to find in it a scripture of the Karmayoga, a Light leading us on the path of action, a Gospel of Works. Undoubtedly, the Gita is a Gospel of Works, but of works which culminate in knowledge, that is, in spiritual realisation and quietude, and of works motived by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self first into the hands and then into the being of the Supreme, and not at all of works as they are understood by the modern mind, not at all an action dictated by egoistic and altruistic, by personal,

social, humanitarian motives, principles, ideals. Yet this is what present-day interpretations seek to make of the Gita. We are told continually by many authoritative voices that the Gita, opposing in this the ordinary ascetic and quietistic tendency of Indian thought and spirituality, proclaims with no uncertain sound the gospel of human action, the ideal of disinterested performance of social duties, nay, even, it would seem, the quite modern ideal of social service. To all this I can only reply that very patently and even on the very surface of it the Gita does nothing of the kind and that this is a modern misreading, a reading of the modern mind into an ancient book, of the present-day European or Europeanised intellect into a thoroughly antique, a thoroughly Oriental and Indian teaching. That which the Gita teaches is not a human, but a divine action ; not the performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature ; not social service, but the action of the Best, the God-possessed, the Master-men done impersonally for the sake of the world and as a sacrifice to Him who stands behind man and Nature.

In other words, the Gita is not a book of practical ethics, but of the spiritual life. The modern mind is just now the European mind, such as it has become after having abandoned not only the philosophic idealism of the highest Graeco-Roman culture from which it started, but the

Christian devotionalism of the Middle Ages; these it has replaced by or transmuted into a practical idealism and social, patriotic and philanthropic devotion. It has got rid of God or kept Him only for Sunday use and erected in His place man as its deity and society as its visible idol. At its best it is practical, ethical, social, pragmatic, altruistic, humanitarian. Now all these things are good, are especially needed at the present day, are part of the divine Will or they would not have become so dominant in humanity. Nor is there any reason why the divine man, the man who lives in the Brahmic consciousness, in the God-being should not be all of these things in his action; he will be, if they are the best ideal of the age, the Yugadharma, and there is no yet higher ideal to be established, no great radical change to be effected. For he is, as the Teacher points out to his disciple, the best who has to set the standard for others; and in fact Arjuna is called upon to live according to the highest ideals of his age and the prevailing culture, but with knowledge, with understanding of that which lay behind, and not as ordinary men, with a following of the merely outward law and rule.

But the point here is that the modern mind has exiled from its practical motive-power the two essential things, God or the Eternal and spirituality or the God-state, which are the master conceptions of the Gita. It lives in humanity only, and the Gita would have us live in God, though for the

world in God; in its life, heart and intellect only, and the Gita would have us live in the spirit; in the mutable Being who is "all creatures", and the Gita would have us live also in the Immutable and the Supreme; in the changing march of Time, and the Gita would have us live in the Eternal. Or if these higher things are now beginning to be vaguely envisaged, it is only to make them subservient to man and society; but God and spirituality exist in their own right and not as adjuncts. And in practice the lower in us must learn to exist for the higher, in order that the higher also may in us consciously exist for the lower, to draw it nearer to its own altitudes.

Therefore it is a mistake to interpret the Gita from the standpoint of the mentality of to-day and force it to teach us the disinterested performance of duty as the highest and all-sufficient law. A little consideration of the situation with which the Gita deals will show us that this could not be its meaning. For the whole point of the teaching, that from which it arises, that which compels the disciple to seek the Teacher, is an inextricable clash of the various related conceptions of duty ending in the collapse of the whole useful intellectual and moral edifice erected by the human mind. In human life some sort of a clash arises fairly often, as for instance between domestic duties and the call of the country or the cause, or between the claim of the country and the good of humanity or some larger religious or moral principle. An inner situation may even

arise, as with the Buddha, in which all duties have to be abandoned, trampled on, flung aside in order to follow the call of the Divine within. I cannot think that the Gita would solve such an inner situation by sending Buddha back to his wife and father and the government of the Sakya State, or would direct a Ramakrishna to become a Pundit in a vernacular school and disinterestedly teach little boys their lessons, or bind down a Vivekananda to support his family and for that to follow dispassionately the law or medicine or journalism. The Gita does not teach the disinterested performance of duties but the following of the divine life, the abandonment of all dharmas, *sarvadharmân,* to take refuge in the Supreme alone, and the divine activity of a Buddha, a Ramakrishna, a Vivekananda is perfectly in consonance with this teaching. Nay, although the Gita prefers action to inaction, it does not rule out the renunciation of works, but accepts it as one of the ways to the Divine. If that can only be attained by renouncing works and life and all duties and the call is strong within us, then into the bonfire they must go, and there is no help for it. The call of God is imperative and cannot be weighed against any other considerations.

But here there is this farther difficulty that the action which Arjuna must do is one from which his moral sense recoils. It is his duty to fight, you say? But that duty has now become to his mind a terrible sin. How does it help him or solve his difficulty,

to tell him that he must do his duty disinterestedly, dispassionately? He will want to know which is his duty or how it can be his duty to destroy in a sanguinary massacre his kin, his race and his country.' He is told that he has right on his side, but that does not and cannot satisfy him, because his very point is that the justice of his legal claim does not justify him in supporting it by a pitiless massacre destructive to the future of his nation. Is he then to act dispassionately in the sense of not caring whether it is a sin or what its consequences may be so long as he does his duty as a soldier? That may be the teaching of a State, of politicians, of lawyers, of ethical casuists; it can never be the teaching of a great religious and philosophical Scripture which sets out to solve the problem of life and action from the very roots. And if that is what the Gita has to say on a most poignant moral and spiritual problem, we must put it out of the list of the world's Scriptures and thrust it, if anywhere, then into our library of political science and ethical casuistry.

Undoubtedly, the Gita does, like the Upanishads, teach the equality which rises above sin and virtue, beyond good and evil, but only as a part of the Brahmic consciousness and for the man who is on the path and advanced enough to fulfil the supreme rule. It does not preach indifference to good and evil for the ordinary life of man, where such a doctrine would have the most pernicious consequences. On the contrary it affirms that the

doers of evil shall not attain to God. Therefore if Arjuna simply seeks to fulfil in the best way the ordinary law of man's life, disinterested performance of what he feels to be a sin, a thing of Hell, will not help him, even though that sin be his duty as a soldier. He must refrain from what his conscience abhors though a thousand duties were shattered to pieces.

We must remember that duty is an idea which in practice rests upon social conceptions. We may extend the term beyond its proper connotation and talk of our duty to ourselves or we may, if we like, say in a transcendent sense that it was Buddha's duty to abandon all, or even that it is the ascetic's duty to sit motionless in a cave! But this is obviously to play with words. Duty is a relative term and depends upon our relation to others. It is a father's duty, as a father, to nurture and educate his children ; a lawyer's to do his best for his client even if he knows him to be guilty and his defence to be a lie ; a soldier's to fight and shoot to order even if he kill his own kin and countrymen ; a judge's to send the guilty to prison and hang the murderer. And so long as these positions are accepted, the duty remains clear, a practical matter of course even when it is not a point of honour or affection, and overrides the absolute religious or moral law. But what if the inner view is changed, if the lawyer is awakened to the absolute sinfulness of falsehood, the judge becomes convinced that capital punishment is a crime against humanity,

the man called upon to the battle-field feels, like the conscientious objector of to-day or as a Tolstoy would feel, that in no circumstances is it permissible to take human life any more than to eat human flesh? It is obvious that here the moral law which is above all relative duties must prevail; and that law depends on no social relation or conception of duty but on the awakened inner perception of man, the moral being.

There are in the world, in fact, two different laws of conduct each valid on its own plane, the rule principally dependent on external status and the rule independent of status and entirely dependent on the thought and conscience. The Gita does not teach us to subordinate the higher plane to the lower, it does not ask the awakened moral consciousness to slay itself on the altar of duty as a sacrifice and victim to the law of the social status. It calls us higher and not lower; from the conflict of the two planes it bids us ascend to a supreme poise above the mainly practical, above the purely ethical, to the Brahmic consciousness. It replaces the conception of social duty by a divine obligation. The subjection to external law gives place to a certain principle of inner self-determination of action proceeding by the soul's freedom from the tangled law of works. And this, as we shall see,—the Brahmic consciousness, the soul's freedom from works and the determination of works in the nature by the Lord within and above us,—is the kernel of the Gita's teaching with regard to action.

The Gita can only be understood, like any other great work of the kind, by studying it in its entirety and as a developing argument. But the modern interpreters, starting from the great writer Bunkim Chundra Chatterji who first gave to the Gita this new sense of a Gospel of Duty, have laid an almost exclusive stress on the first three or four chapters and in those on the idea of equality, on the expression *kartavyam karma,* the work that is to be done, which they render by duty, and on the phrase "Thou hast a right to action, but none to the fruits of action" which is now popularly quoted as the great word, *mahâvâkya,* of the Gita. The rest of the eighteen chapters with their high philosophy are given a secondary importance, except indeed the great vision in the eleventh. This is natural enough for the modern mind which is, or has been till yesterday, inclined to be impatient of metaphysical subtleties and far-off spiritual seekings, eager to get to work and, like Arjuna himself, mainly concerned for a workable law of works, a *dharma.* But it is the wrong way to handle this Scripture.

The equality which the Gita preaches is not disinterestedness,—the great command to Arjuna given *after* the foundation and main structure of the teaching have been laid and built, "Arise, slay thy enemies, enjoy a prosperous kingdom," has not the ring of an uncompromising altruism or of a white, dispassionate abnegation ; it is a state of inner poise and wideness which is the foundation of

spiritual freedom. With that poise, in that freedom we have to do the "work that is to be done," a phrase which the Gita uses with the greatest wideness including in it all works, *sarvakarmâni,* and which far exceeds, though it may include, social duties or ethical obligations. What is the work to be done is not to be determined by the individual choice; nor is the right to the action and the rejection of claim to the fruit the great word of the Gita, but only a preliminary word governing the first state of the disciple when he begins ascending the hill of Yoga. It is practically superseded at a subsequent stage. For the Gita goes on to affirm emphatically that the man is not the doer of the action; it is Prakriti, it is Nature, it is the great Force with its three modes of action that works through him, and he must learn to see that it is *not* he who does the work. Therefore the "right to action" is an idea which is only valid so long as we are still under the illusion of being the doer; it must necessarily disappear from the mind like the claim to the fruit, as soon as we cease to be to our own consciousness the doer of our works. All pragmatic egoism, whether of the claim to fruits or of the right to action, is then at an end.

But the determinism of Prakriti is not the last word of the Gita. The equality of the will and the rejection of fruits are only means for entering with the mind and the heart and the understanding into the divine consciousness and living in it; and the Gita expressly says that they are to be employed as

a means as long as the disciple is unable so to live or even to seek by practice the gradual development of this higher state. And what is this Divine, whom Krishna declares himself to be? It is the Purushottama beyond the Self that acts not, beyond the Prakriti that acts, foundation of the one, master of the other, the Lord of whom all is the manifestation, who even in our present subjection to Maya sits in the heart of His creatures governing the works of Prakriti, He by whom the armies on the field of Kurukshetra have already been slain while yet they live and who uses Arjuna only as an instrument or immediate occasion of this great slaughter. Prakriti is only His executive force. The disciple has to rise beyond this Force and its three modes or *gunas ;* he has to become *trigunâtîta.* Not to her has he to surrender his actions, over which he has no longer any claim or "right", but into the being of the Supreme. Reposing his mind and understanding, heart and will in Him, with self-knowledge, with God-knowledge, with world-knowledge, with a perfect equality, a perfect devotion, an absolute self-giving, he has to do works as an offering to the Master of all self-energisings and all sacrifice. Identified in will, conscious with that consciousness, That shall decide and initiate the action. This is the solution which the Divine Teacher offers to the disciple.

What the great, the supreme word of the Gita is, its *mahâvâkya,* we have not to seek ; for the Gita itself declares it in its last utterance, the crowning

note of the great diapason. "With the Lord in thy heart take refuge with all thy being; by His grace thou shalt attain to the supreme peace and the eternal status. So have I expounded to thee a knowledge more secret than that which is hidden. Further hear the most secret, the supreme word that I shall speak to thee. Become my-minded, devoted to Me, to Me do sacrifice and adoration; infallibly, thou shalt come to Me, for dear to me art thou. Abandoning all laws of conduct seek refuge in Me alone. I will release thee from all sin; do not grieve."

The argument of the Gita resolves itself into three great steps by which action rises out of the human into the divine plane leaving the bondage of the lower for the liberty of a higher law. First, by the renunciation of desire and a perfect equality works have to be done as a sacrifice by man as the doer, a sacrifice to a deity who is the supreme and only Self though by him not yet realised in his own being. This is the initial step. Secondly, not only the desire of the fruit, but the claim to be the doer of works has to be renounced in the realisation of the Self as the equal, the inactive, the immutable principle and of all works as simply the operation of universal Force, of the Nature-Soul, Prakriti, the unequal, active, mutable power. Lastly, the supreme Self has to be seen as the supreme Purusha governing this Prakriti, of whom the soul in Nature is a partial manifestation, by whom all works are directed, in a perfect transcendence, through Nature.

To him love and adoration and the sacrifice of works have to be offered; the whole being has to be surrendered to Him and the whole consciousness raised up to dwell in this divine consciousness so that the human soul may share in His divine transcendence of Nature and of His works and act in a perfect spiritual liberty.

The first step is Karmayoga, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the Gita's insistence is on action. The second is Jnanayoga, the self-realisation and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world, and here the insistence is on knowledge; but the sacrifice of works continues and the path of Works becomes one with but does not disappear into the path of Knowledge. The last step is Bhaktiyoga, adoration and seeking of the supreme Self as the Divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion; but the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalised and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues; the double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained, union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine nature.

V

KURUKSHETRA

BEFORE we can proceed, following in the large steps of the Teacher of the Gita, to watch his tracing of the triune path of man,—the path which is that of his will, heart, thought raising themselves to the Highest and into the being of that which is the supreme object of all action, love and knowledge, we must consider once more the situation from which the Gita arises, but now in its largest bearings as a type of human life and even of all world-existence. For although Arjuna is himself concerned only with his own situation, his inner struggle and the law of action he must follow, yet, as we have seen, the particular question he raises, in the manner in which he raises it does really bring up the whole question of human life and action, what the world is and why it is and how possibly, it being what it is, life here in the world can be reconciled with life in the Spirit. And all this deep and difficult matter the Teacher insists on resolving as the very foundation of his command to an action which must proceed from a new poise of being and by the light of a liberating knowledge.

But what, then, is it that makes the difficulty for the man who has to take the world as it is and

act in it and yet would live, within, the spiritual life? What is this aspect of existence which appals his awakened mind and brings about what the title of the first chapter of the Gita calls significantly the Yoga of the dejection of Arjuna, the dejection and discouragement felt by the human being when he is forced to face the spectacle of the universe as it really is with the veil of the ethical illusion, the illusion of self-righteousness torn from his eyes, before a higher reconciliation with himself is effected? It is that aspect which is figured outwardly in the carnage and massacre of Kurukshetra and spiritually by the vision of the Lord of all things as Time arising to devour and destroy the creatures whom it has made. This is the vision of the Lord of all existence as the universal Creator but also the universal Destroyer, of whom the ancient Scripture can say in a ruthless image, "The sages and the heroes are his food and death is the spice of his banquet." It is one and the same truth seen first indirectly and obscurely in the facts of life and then directly and clearly in the soul's vision of that which manifests itself in life. The outward aspect is that of world-existence and human existence proceeding by struggle and slaughter ; the inward aspect is that of the universal Being fulfilling himself in a vast creation and a vast destruction. Life a battle and a field of death, this is Kurukshetra ; God the Terrible, this is the vision that Arjuna sees on that field of massacre.

War, said Heraclitus, is the father of all things, War is the king of all ; and the saying, like most of

the apophthegms of the Greek thinker, suggests a profound truth. From a clash of material or other forces everything in this world, if not the world itself, seems to be born; by a struggle of forces, tendencies, principles, beings it seems to proceed, ever creating new things, ever destroying the old, marching one knows not very well whither,—to a final self-destruction, say some; in an unending series of vain cycles, say others; in progressive cycles, is the most optimistic conclusion, leading through whatever trouble and apparent confusion towards a higher and higher approximation to some divine apocalypse. However that may be, this is certain that there is not only no construction here without destruction, no harmony except by a poise of contending forces won out of many actual and potential discords, but also no continued existence of life except by a constant self-feeding and devouring of other life. Our very bodily life is a constant dying and being reborn, the body itself a beleaguered city attacked by assailing, protected by defending forces whose business is to devour each other: and this is only a type of all our existence. The command seems to have gone out from the beginning, "Thou shalt not conquer except by battle with thy fellows and thy surroundings; thou shalt not even live except by battle and struggle and by absorbing into thyself other life. The first law of this world that I have made is creation and preservation by destruction."

Ancient thought accepted this starting-point so far as it could see it by scrutiny of the universe. The old Upanishads saw it very clearly and phrased it with an uncompromising thoroughness which will have nothing to do with any honeyed glosses or optimistic scuttlings of the truth. Hunger that is Death, they said, is the creator and master of this world, and they figured vital existence in the image of the Horse of the sacrifice. Matter they described by a name which means ordinarily food and they said, we call it food because it is devoured and devours creatures. The eater eating is eaten, this is the formula of the material world, as the Darwinians rediscovered when they laid it down that the struggle for life is the law of evolutionary existence. Modern science has only rephrased the old truths that had already been expressed in much more forcible, wide and accurate formulas by the apophthegm of Heraclitus and the figures employed by the Upanishads.

Nietzsche's insistence upon war as an aspect of life and the ideal man as a warrior,—the camel-man he may be to begin with and the child-man hereafter, but the lion-man he must become in the middle, if he is to attain his perfection,—these now much-decried theories of Nietzsche have, however much we may differ from many of the moral and practical conclusions he drew from them, their undeniable justification and recall us to a truth we like to hide out of sight. It is good that we should be reminded of it; first, because to see it has for

every strong soul a tonic effect which saves us from the flabbiness and relaxation encouraged by a too mellifluous philosophic, religious or ethical sentimentalism, that which loves to look upon Nature as love and life and beauty and good, but turns away from her grim mask of death, adoring God as Shiva but refusing to adore him as Rudra ; secondly, because unless we have the honesty and courage to look existence straight in the face, we shall never arrive at any effective solution of its discords and oppositions. We must see first what life and the world are; afterwards, we can all the better set about finding the right way to transform them into what they should be. If this repellent aspect of existence holds in itself some secret of the final harmony, we shall by ignoring or belittling it miss that secret and all our efforts at a solution will fail by fault of our self-indulgent ignoring of the true elements of the problem. If, on the other hand, it is an enemy to be beaten down, trampled on, excised, eliminated, still we gain nothing by underrating its power and hold upon life or refusing to see how firmly it is rooted in the effective past and the actually operative principles of existence.

War and destruction are not only a universal principle of our life here in its purely material aspects, but also of our mental and moral existence. It is self-evident that in the actual life of man intellectual, social, political, moral we can make no real step forward without a struggle, a battle between what exists and lives and what seeks to exist and

live and between all that stands behind either. It is impossible, at least as men and things are, to advance, to grow, to fulfil and still to observe really and utterly that principle of harmlessness which is yet placed before us as the highest and best law of conduct. We will use only soul-force and never destroy by war or any even defensive employment of physical violence? Good, though until soul-force is effective, the Asuric force in men and nations tramples down, breaks, slaughters, burns, pollutes, as we see it doing to-day, but then at its ease and unhindered, and you have perhaps caused as much destruction of life by your abstinence as others by resort to violence; still you have set up an ideal which may some day and at any rate ought to lead up to better things. But even soul-force, when it is effective, destroys. Only those who have used it with eyes open, know how much more terrible and destructive it is than the sword and the cannon; and only those who do not limit their view to the act and its immediate results, can see how tremendous are its after-effects, how much is eventually destroyed and with that much all the life that depended on it and fed upon it. Evil cannot perish without the destruction of much that lives by the evil, and it is no less destruction even if we personally are saved the pain of a sensational act of violence.

Moreover, every time we use soul-force we raise a great force of Karma against our adversary, the after-movements of which we have no power to control. Vasishtha uses soul-force against the

military violence of Viswamitra and armies of Huns and Shakas and Pallavas hurl themselves on the aggressor. The very quiescence and passivity of the spiritual man under violence and aggression awakens the tremendous forces of the world to a retributive action; and it may even be more merciful to stay in their path, though by force, those who represent evil than to allow them to trample on until they call down on themselves a worse destruction than we would ever think of inflicting. It is not enough that our own hands should remain clean and our souls unstained for the law of strife and destruction to die out of the world; that which is its root must first disappear out of humanity. Much less will mere immobility and inertia unwilling to use or incapable of using any kind of resistance to evil, abrogate the law; inertia, tamas, indeed, injures much more than can the rajasic principle of strife which at least creates more than it destroys. Therefore, so far as the problem of the individual's action goes, his abstention from strife and its inevitable concomitant destruction in their more gross and physical form may help his own moral being, but it leaves the Slayer of creatures unabolished.

For the rest the whole of human history bears witness to the inexorable vitality and persistent prevalence of this principle in the world. It is natural that we should attempt to palliate, to lay stress on other aspects. Strife and destruction are not all; there is the saving principle of association

and mutual help as well as the force of dissociation and mutual strife; a power of love no less than a power of egoistic self-assertion; an impulse to sacrifice ourselves for others as well as the impulse to sacrifice others to ourselves. But when we see how these have actually worked, we shall not be tempted to gloss over or ignore the power of their opposites. Association has been worked not only for mutual help, but at the same time for defence and aggression, to strengthen us against all that attacks or resists in the struggle for life. Association itself has been a servant of war, egoism and the self-assertion of life against life. Love itself has been constantly a power of death. Especially the love of good and the love of God, as embraced by the human ego, have been responsible for much strife, slaughter and destruction. Self-sacrifice is great and noble, but at its highest it is an acknowledgment of the law of Life by death and becomes an offering on the altar of some Power that demands a victim in order that the work desired may be done. The mother bird facing the animal of prey in defence of its young, the patriot dying for his country's freedom, the religious martyr or the martyr of an idea, these in the lower and the superior scale of animal life are highest examples of self-sacrifice, and it is evident to what they bear witness.

But if we look at after results, an easy optimism becomes even less possible. See the patriot dying in order that his country may be free, and mark that country a few decades after the Lord of Karma

has paid the price of the blood and the suffering that was given; you shall see it in its turn an oppressor, an exploiter and conqueror of colonies and dependencies devouring others that it may live and succeed aggressively in life. The Christian martyrs perish in their thousands, setting soul-force against empire-force that Christ may conquer, Christianity prevail. Soul-force does triumph, Christianity does prevail,—but not Christ; the victorious religion becomes a militant and dominant Church and a more fanatically persecuting power than the creed and the empire which it replaced. The very religions organise themselves into powers of mutual strife and battle together fiercely to live, to grow, to possess the world.

All which seems to show that here is an element in existence, perhaps the initial element, which we do not know how to conquer either because it cannot be conquered or because we have not looked at it with a strong and impartial gaze so as to recognise it calmly and fairly and know what it is. We must look existence in the face if our aim is to arrive at a right solution, whatever that solution may be. And to look existence in the face is to look God in the face; for the two cannot be separated, nor the responsibility for the laws of world-existence be shifted away from Him who created them or from That which constituted it. Yet here too we love to palliate and equivocate. We erect a God of Love and Mercy, a God of good, a God just, righteous and virtuous according to our

own moral conceptions of justice, virtue and righteousness, and all the rest, we say, is not He or is not His, but was made by some diabolical Power which He suffered for some reason to work out its wicked will or by some dark Ahriman counterbalancing our gracious Ormuzd, or was even the fault of selfish and sinful man who has spoiled what was made originally perfect by God. As if man had created the law of death and devouring in the animal world or that tremendous process by which Nature creates indeed and preserves but in the same step and by the same inextricable action slays and destroys. It is only a few religions which have had the courage to say without any reserve, like the Indian, that this enigmatic World-Power is one Deity, one Trinity, to lift up the image of the Force that acts in the world in the figure not only of the beneficent Durga, but of the terrible Kali in her blood-stained dance of destruction and to say, "This too is the Mother; this also know to be God; this too, if thou hast the strength, adore." And it is significant that the religion which has had this unflinching honesty and tremendous courage, has succeeded in creating a profound and wide-spread spirituality such as no other can parallel. For truth is the foundation of real spirituality and courage is its soul. *Tasyai satyam âyatanam.*

All this is not to say that strife and destruction are the alpha and omega of existence, that harmony is not greater than war, love more the manifest

divine than death or that we must not move towards the replacement of physical force by soul-force, of war by peace, of strife by union, of devouring by love, of egoism by universality, of death by immortal life. God is not only the Destroyer, but the Friend of creatures ; not only the cosmic Trinity, but the Transcendent ; the terrible Kali is also the loving and beneficent Mother ; the lord of Kurukshetra is the divine comrade and charioteer, the attracter of beings, incarnate Krishna. And whithersoever he is driving through all the strife and clash and confusion, to whatever goal or godhead he may be attracting us, it is—no doubt of that—to some transcendence of all these aspects upon which we have been so firmly insisting. But where, how, with what kind of transcendence, under what conditions, this we have to discover ; and to discover it, the first necessity is to see the world as it is, to observe and value rightly his action as it reveals itself at the start and now ; afterwards the way and the goal will better reveal themselves. We must acknowledge Kurukshetra ; we must submit to the law of Life by Death before we can find our way to the life immortal ; we must open our eyes, with a less appalled gaze than Arjuna's, to the vision of our Lord of Time and Death and cease to deny, hate or recoil from the universal Destroyer.

VI

MAN AND THE BATTLE OF LIFE

THUS, if we are to appreciate in its catholicity the teaching of the Gita, we must accept intellectually its standpoint and courageous envisaging of the manifest nature and process of the world. The divine charioteer of Kurukshetra reveals himself on one side as the Lord of all the worlds and the Friend and omniscient Guide of all creatures, on the other as Time the Destroyer "arisen for the destruction of these peoples." The Gita, following in this the spirit of the catholic Hindu religion affirms this also as God ; it does not attempt to evade the enigma of the world by escaping from it through a side-door. If, in fact, we do not regard existence merely as the mechanic action of a brute and indifferent material Force or, on the other hand, as an equally mechanical play of ideas and energies arising out of an original Non-Existence or else reflected in the passive Soul or the evolution of a dream or nightmare in the surface consciousness of an indifferent, immutable Transcendence which is unaffected by the dream and has no real part in it,—if we accept at all, as the Gita accepts, the existence of God, that is to say of the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, yet always transcendent

Being who manifests the world and Himself in the world, who is not the slave but the lord of His creative Consciousness, Nature or Force (Maya, Prakriti or Shakti), who is not baffled or thwarted in His world-conception or design by His creatures, man or devil, who does not need to justify Himself by shifting the responsibility for any part of His creation or manifestation on that which is created or manifested, then the human being has to start from a great, a difficult act of faith. Finding himself in a world which is apparently a chaos of battling powers, a clash of vast and obscure forces, a life which subsists only by constant change and death, menaced from every side by pain, suffering, evil and destruction, he has to see the omnipresent Deity in it all and conscious that of this enigma there must be a solution and beyond this Ignorance in which he dwells a Knowledge that reconciles, he has to take his stand upon this faith, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee." All human thought or faith that is active and affirmative, whether it be theistic, pantheistic or atheistic does in fact involve more or less explicitly and completely such an attitude. It admits and it believes: admits the discords of the world, believes in some highest principle of God, universal Being or Nature which shall enable us to transcend, overcome or harmonise these discords, perhaps even to do all three at once, to harmonise by overcoming and transcending.

Then, as to human life in its actualities, we have to accept its aspect of a struggle and a battle

mounting into supreme crises such as that of Kurukshetra. The Gita, as we have seen, takes for its frame such a period of transition and crisis as humanity periodically experiences in its history, in which great forces clash together for a huge destruction and reconstruction, intellectual, social, moral, religious, political, and these in the actual psychological and social stage of human evolution culminate usually through a violent physical convulsion of strife, war or revolution. The Gita proceeds from the acceptance of the necessity in Nature for such vehement crises and it accepts not only the moral aspect, the struggle between righteousness and unrighteousness, between the self-affirming law of Good and the forces that oppose its progression, but also the physical aspect, the actual armed war or other vehement physical strife between the human beings who represent the antagonistic powers. We must remember that the Gita was composed at a time when war was even more than it is now a necessary part of human activity and the idea of its elimination from the scheme of life would have been an absolute chimera. The gospel of universal peace and goodwill among men—for without a universal and entire mutual goodwill there can be no real and abiding peace—has never succeeded for a moment in possessing itself of human life during the historic cycle of our progress, because morally, socially, spiritually the race was not prepared and the poise of Nature in its evolution would not admit of its being

immediately prepared for any such transcendence. Even now we have not actually progressed beyond the feasibility of a system of accommodation between conflicting interests which may minimise the recurrence of the worst forms of strife. And towards this consummation the method, the approach which humanity has been forced by its own nature to adopt, is a monstrous mutual massacre unparallelled in history; a universal war, full of bitterness and irreconcilable hatred, is the straight way and the triumphant means modern man has found for the establishment of universal peace! That consummation, too, founded not upon any fundamental change in human nature, but upon intellectual notions, economic convenience, vital and sentimental shrinkings from the loss of life, discomfort and horror of war, effected by nothing better than political adjustments, gives no very certain promise of firm foundation and long duration. A day may come, must surely come, we will say, when humanity will be ready spiritually, morally, socially for the reign of universal peace; meanwhile the aspect of battle and the nature and function of man as a fighter have to be accepted and accounted for by any practical philosophy and religion. The Gita, taking life as it is and not only as it may be in some distant future, puts the question how this aspect and function of life, which is really an aspect and function of human activity in general, can be harmonised with the spiritual existence.

The Gita is therefore addressed to a fighter, a man of action, one whose duty in life is that of war and protection, war as a part of government for the protection of those who are excused from that duty, debarred from protecting themselves and therefore at the mercy of the strong and the violent, war, secondly and by a moral extension of this idea, for the protection of the weak and the oppressed and for the maintenance of right and justice in the world. For all these ideas, the social and practical, the moral and the chivalrous enter into the Indian conception of the Kshatriya, the man who is a warrior and ruler by function and a knight and king in his nature. Although the more general and universal ideas of the Gita are those which are the most important to us, we ought not to leave out of consideration altogether the colouring and trend they take from the peculiar Indian culture and social system in the midst of which they arose. That system differed from the modern in its conception. To the modern mind man is a thinker, worker or producer and a fighter all in one, and the tendency of the social system is to lump all these activities and to demand from each individual his contribution to the intellectual, economical and military life and needs of the community without paying any heed to the demands of his individual nature and temperament. The ancient Indian civilisation laid peculiar stress on the individual nature, tendency, temperament and sought to determine by it the ethical type, function and place in the society. Nor

did it consider man primarily as a social being or the fullness of his social existence as the highest ideal, but rather as a spiritual being in process of formation and development and his social life, ethical law, play of temperament and exercise of function as means and stages of spiritual formation. Thought and knowledge, war and government, production and distribution, labour and service were carefully differentiated functions of society, each assigned to those who were naturally called to it and providing the right means by which they could individually proceed towards their spiritual development and self-perfection.

The modern idea of a common obligation in all the main departments of human activity has its advantages ; it helps to greater solidarity, unity and fullness in the life of the community and a more all-round development of the complete human being as opposed to the endless divisions and over-specialisation and the narrowing and artificial shackling of the life of the individual to which the Indian system eventually led. But it has also its disadvantages and in certain of its developments the too logical application of it has led to grotesque and disastrous absurdities. This is evident enough in the character of modern war. From the idea of a common military obligation binding on every individual to defend and fight for the community by which he lives and profits, has arisen the system by which the whole manhood of the nation is hurled into the bloody trench to slay and be slain, thinkers, artists, philo-

sophers, priests, merchants, artisans all torn from their natural functions, the whole life of the community disorganised, reason and conscience overridden, even the minister of religion who is salaried by the State or called by his function to preach the gospel of peace and love forced to deny his creed and become a butcher of his fellow-men! Not only are conscience and nature violated by the arbitrary fiat of the military State, but national defence carried to an insane extreme makes its best attempt to become a national suicide.

Indian civilisation on the contrary made it its chief aim to minimise the incidence and disaster of war. For this purpose it limited the military obligation to the small class who by their birth, nature and traditions were marked out for this function and found in it their natural means of self-development through the flowering of the soul in the qualities of courage, disciplined force, strong helpfulness and chivalrous nobility for which the warrior's life pursued under the stress of a high ideal gives a field and opportunities. The rest of the community was in every way guarded from slaughter and outrage; their life and occupations were as little interfered with as possible and the combative and destructive tendencies of human nature were given a restricted field, confined in a sort of lists so as to do the minimum amount of harm to the general life of the race, while at the same time by being subjected to high ethical ideals and every possible rule of humanity and chivalry the function of war was obliged to help

in ennobling and elevating instead of brutalising those who performed it. It must be remembered that it is war of this kind and under these conditions that the Gita had in view, war considered as an inevitable part of human life, but so restricted and regulated as to serve like other activities the ethical and spiritual development which was then regarded as the whole real object of life, war destructive within certain carefully fixed limits of the bodily life of individual men but constructive of their inner life and of the ethical elevation of the race. That war in the past has, when subjected to an ideal, helped in this elevation, as in the development of knighthood and chivalry, the Indian ideal of the Kshatriya, the Japanese ideal of the Samurai, can only be denied by the fanatics of pacifism. When it has fulfilled its function, it may well disappear ; for if it tries to survive its utility, it will appear as an unrelieved brutality of violence stripped of its ideal and constructive aspects and will be rejected by the progressive mind of humanity ; but its past service to the race must be admitted in any reasonable view of our evolution.

The physical fact of war, however, is only a special and outward manifestation of a general principle in life and the Kshatriya is only the outward manifestation and type of a general characteristic necessary to the completeness of human perfection. War typifies and embodies physically the aspect of battle and struggle which belongs to all life, both to our inner and our outer living, in a world whose

method is a meeting and wrestling of forces which progress by mutual destruction towards a continually changing adjustment expressive of a progressive harmonising and hopeful of a perfect harmony based upon some yet ungrasped potentiality of oneness. The Kshatriya is the type and embodiment of the fighter in man who accepts this principle in life and faces it as a warrior striving towards mastery, not shrinking from the destruction of bodies and forms, but through it all aiming at the realisation of some principle of right, justice, law which shall be the basis of the harmony towards which the struggle tends. The Gita accepts this aspect of the world-energy and the physical fact of war which embodies it, and it addresses itself to the man of action, the striver and fighter, the Kshatriya,—war which is the extreme contradiction of the soul's high aspiration to peace within and harmlessness* without, the striver and fighter whose necessary turmoil of struggle and action seems to be the very contradiction of the soul's high ideal of calm mastery and self-possession,—and it seeks for an issue from the contradiction, a point at which its terms meet and a poise which shall be the first essential basis of harmony and transcendence.

Man meets the battle of life in the manner most consonant with the essential quality most dominant in his nature. There are, according to the Sankhya philosophy accepted in this respect

* Ahimsâ.

by the Gita, three essential qualities or modes of the world-energy and therefore also of human nature, *sattwa,* the mode of poise, knowledge and satisfaction, *rajas,* the mode of passion, action and struggling emotion, *tamas,* the mode of ignorance and inertia. Dominated by *tamas,* man does not so much meet the rush and shock of the world-energies whirling about him and converging upon him as he succumbs to them, is overborne by them, afflicted, subjected; or at the most, helped by the other qualities, the tamasic man seeks only somehow to survive, to subsist so long as he may, to shelter himself in the fortress of an established routine of thought and action in which he feels himself to a certain extent protected from the battle, able to reject the demand which his higher nature makes upon him, excused from accepting the necessity of farther struggle and the ideal of an increasing effort and mastery. Dominated by *rajas,* man flings himself into the battle and attempts to use the struggle of forces for his own egoistic benefit, to slay, conquer, dominate, enjoy; or, helped by a certain measure of the sattwic quality, the rajasic man makes the struggle itself a means of increasing inner mastery, joy, power, possession The battle of life becomes his delight and passion partly for its own sake, for the pleasure of activity and the sense of power, partly as a means of his increase and natural self-development. Dominated by *sattwa,* man seeks in the midst of the strife for a principle of law, right, poise, harmony, peace, satisfaction. The purely sattwic man tends

to seek this within, whether for himself alone or with an impulse to communicate it, when won, to other human minds, but usually by a sort of inner detachment from or else an outer rejection of the strife and turmoil of the active world-energy ; but if the sattwic mind accepts partly the rajasic impulse, it seeks rather to impose this poise and harmony upon the struggle and apparent chaos, to vindicate a victory for peace, love and harmony over the principle of war, discord and struggle. All the attitudes adopted by the human mind towards the problem of life either derive from the domination of one or other of these qualities or else from an attempt at balance and harmony between them.

But there comes also a stage in which the mind recoils from the whole problem and, dissatisfied with the solutions given by the threefold mode of Nature, *traigunya,* seeks for some higher solution outside of it or else above it. It looks for an escape either into something which is outside and void of all qualities and therefore of all activity or in something which is superior to the three qualities and master of them and therefore at once capable of action and unaffected, undominated by its own action, in the *nirguna* or the *trigunâtîta.* It aspires to an absolute peace and unconditioned existence or to a dominant calm and superior existence. The natural movement of the former attitude is towards the renunciation of the world, *sannyâsa ;* of the latter towards superiority to the claims of the lower nature and its whirl of actions and reactions, and its

principle is equality and the inner renunciation of passion and desire. The former is the first impulse of Arjuna recoiling from the calamitous culmination of all his heroic activity in the great cataclysm of battle and massacre, Kurukshetra ; losing his whole past principle of action, inaction and the rejection of life and its claims seem to him the only issue. But it is to an inner superiority and not to the physical renunciation of life and action that he is called by the voice of the divine Teacher.

Arjuna is the Kshatriya, the rajasic man who governs his rajasic action by a high sattwic ideal. He advances to this gigantic struggle, to this Kurukshetra with the full acceptance of the joy of battle, as to "a holiday of fight", but with a proud confidence in the righteousness of his cause ; he advances in his rapid chariot tearing the hearts of his enemies with the victorious clamour of his war-conch ; for he wishes to look upon all these Kings of men who have come here to champion against him the cause of unrighteousness and establish as a rule of life the disregard of law, justice and truth which they would replace by the rule of a selfish and arrogant egoism. When this confidence is shattered within him, when he is smitten down from his customary attitude and mental basis of life, it is by the uprush of the tamasic quality into the rajasic man, inducing a recoil of astonishment, grief, horror, dismay, dejection, bewilderment of the mind and the war of reason against itself, a collapse towards the principle of ignorance and inertia. As

a result he turns towards renunciation. Better the life of the mendicant living upon alms than this *dharma* of the Kshatriya, this battle and action culminating in undiscriminating massacre, this principle of mastery and glory and power which can only be won by destruction and bloodshed, this conquest of blood-stained enjoyments, this vindication of justice and right by a means which contradicts all righteousness and this affirmation of the social law by a war which destroys in its process and result all that constitutes society.

Sannyâsa is the renunciation of life and action and of the threefold modes of Nature, but it has to be approached through one or other of the three qualities. The impulse may be tamasic, a feeling of impotence, fear, aversion, disgust, horror of the world and life; or it may be the rajasic quality tending towards tamas, an impulse of weariness of the struggle, grief, disappointment, refusal to accept any longer this vain turmoil of activity with its pains and its eternal discontent. Or the impulse may be that of rajas tending towards sattwa, the impulse to arrive at something superior to anything life can give, to conquer a higher state, to trample down life itself under the feet of an inner strength which seeks to break all bonds and transcend all limits. Or it may be sattwic, an intellectual perception of the vanity of life and the absence of any real goal or justification for this ever-cycling world-existence or else a spiritual perception of the Timeless, the Infinite, the Silent, the nameless and

formless Peace beyond. The recoil of Arjuna is the tamasic recoil from action of the sattwa-rajasic man. The Teacher may confirm it in its direction, using it as a dark entry to the purity and peace of the ascetic life ; or he may purify it at once and raise it towards the rare altitudes of the sattwic tendency of renunciation. In fact, he does neither. He discourages the tamasic recoil and the tendency to renunciation and enjoins the continuance of action and even of the same fierce and terrible action, but he points the disciple towards another and inner renunciation which is the real issue from his crisis and the way towards the soul's superiority to the world-Nature and yet its calm and self-possessed action in the world. Not a physical asceticism, but an inner askesis is the teaching of the Gita.

VII

THE CREED OF THE ARYAN FIGHTER*

THE answer of the divine Teacher to the first flood of Arjuna's passionate self-questioning, his shrinking from slaughter, his sense of sorrow and sin, his grieving for an empty and desolate life, his forecast of evil results of an evil deed, is a strongly-worded rebuke. All this, it is replied, is confusion of mind and delusion, a weakness of the heart, an unmanliness, a fall from the virility of the fighter and the hero. Not this was fitting in the son of Pritha, not thus should the champion and chief hope of a righteous cause abandon it in the hour of crisis and peril or suffer the sudden amazement of his heart and senses, the clouding of his reason and the downfall of his will to betray him into the casting away of his divine weapons and the refusal of his God-given work. This is not the way cherished and followed by the Aryan man; this mood came not from heaven nor can it lead to heaven, and on earth it is the forfeiting of the glory that waits upon strength and heroism and noble works. Let him put from him this weak and self-indulgent pity, let him rise and smite his enemies!

* Gita II, 1-38.

The answer of a hero to a hero, shall we say, but not that which we should expect from a divine Teacher from whom we demand rather that he shall encourage always gentleness and saintliness and self-abnegation and the recoil from worldly aims and cessation from the ways of the world? The Gita expressly says that Arjuna has thus lapsed into unheroic weakness, "his eyes full and distressed with tears, his heart overcome by depression and discouragement," because he is invaded by pity, *kripayâvishtam*. Is this not then a divine weakness? Is not pity a divine emotion which should not thus be discouraged with harsh rebuke? Or are we in face of a mere gospel of war and heroic action, a Nietzschean creed of power and high-browed strength, of Hebraic or old Teutonic hardness which holds pity to be a weakness and thinks like the Norwegian hero who thanked God because He had given him a hard heart? But the teaching of the Gita springs from an Indian creed and to the Indian mind compassion has always figured as one of the largest elements of the divine nature. The Teacher himself enumerating in a later chapter the qualities of the godlike nature in man places among them compassion to creatures, gentleness, freedom from wrath and from the desire to slay and do hurt, no less than fearlessness and high spirit and energy. Harshness and hardness and fierceness and a satisfaction in slaying enemies and amassing wealth and unjust enjoyments are Asuric qualities; they come from the violent Titanic nature which denies

the Divine in the world and the Divine in man and worships Desire only as its deity. It is not then from any such standpoint that the weakness of Arjuna merits rebuke.

"Whence has come to thee this dejection, this stain and darkness of the soul in the hour of difficulty and peril?" asks Krishna of Arjuna. The question points to the real nature of Arjuna's deviation from his heroic qualities. There is a divine compassion which descends to us from on high and for the man whose nature does not possess it, is not cast in its mould, to pretend to be the superior man, the master-man or the superman is a folly and an insolence, for he alone is the superman who most manifests the highest nature of the Godhead in humanity. This compassion observes with an eye of love and wisdom and calm strength the battle and the struggle, the strength and weakness of man, his virtues and sins, his joy and suffering, his knowledge and his ignorance, his wisdom and his folly, his aspiration and his failure and it enters into it all to help and to heal. In the saint and philanthropist it may cast itself into the mould of a plenitude of love or charity; in the thinker and hero it assumes the largeness and the force of a helpful wisdom and strength. It is this compassion in the Aryan fighter, the soul of his chivalry, which will not break the bruised reed, but helps and protects the weak and the oppressed and the wounded and the fallen. But it is also the divine compassion that smites down the strong

tyrant and the confident oppressor, not in wrath and with hatred,—for these are not the high divine qualities, the wrath of God against the sinner, God's hatred of the wicked are the fables of half-enlightened creeds, as much a fable as the eternal torture of the Hells they have invented,—but, as the old Indian spirituality clearly saw, with as much love and compassion for the strong Titan erring by his strength and slain for his sins as for the sufferer and the oppressed who have to be saved from his violence and injustice.

But such is not the compassion which actuates Arjuna in the rejection of his work and mission. That is not compassion but an impotence full of a weak self-pity, a recoil from the mental suffering which his act must entail on himself,—"I see not what shall thrust from me the sorrow that dries up the senses,"—and of all things self-pity is among the most ignoble and un-Aryan of moods. Its pity for others is also a form of self-indulgence ; it is the physical shrinking of the nerves from the act of slaughter, the egoistic emotional shrinking of the heart from the destruction of the Dhritarashtrians because they are "one's own people" and without them life will be empty. This pity is a weakness of the mind and senses,—a weakness which may well be beneficial to men of a lower grade of development, who have to be weak because otherwise they will be hard and cruel ; for they have to cure the harsher by the gentler forms of sensational egoism, they have to call in tamas, the debile principle, to

help sattwa, the principle of light, in quelling the strength and excess of their rajasic passions. But this way is not for the developed Aryan man who has to grow not by weakness, but by an ascension from strength to strength. Arjuna is the divine man, the master-man in the making and as such he has been chosen by the gods. He has a work given to him, he has God beside him in his chariot, he has the heavenly bow Gandiva in his hand, he has the champions of unrighteousness, the opponents of the divine leading of the world in his front. Not his is the right to determine what he shall do or not do according to his emotions and his passions, or to shrink from a necessary destruction by the claim of his egoistic heart and reason, or to decline his work because it will bring sorrow and emptiness to his life or because its earthly result has no value to him in the absence of the thousands who must perish. All that is a weak falling from his higher nature. He has to see, only the work that must be done, *kartavyam karma,* to hear only the divine command breathed through his warrior nature, to feel only for the world and the destiny of mankind calling to him as its god-sent man to assist its march and clear its path of the dark armies that beset it.

Arjuna in his reply to Krishna admits the rebuke even while he strives against and refuses the command. He is aware of his weakness and yet accepts subjection to it. It is poorness of spirit, he owns, that has smitten away from him his true heroic nature ; his whole consciousness is bewildered

in its view of right and wrong and he accepts the divine Friend as his teacher ; but the emotional and intellectual props on which he had supported his sense of righteousness have been entirely cast down and he cannot accept a command which seems to appeal only to his old standpoint and gives him no new basis for action. He attempts still to justify his refusal of the work and puts forward in its support the claim of his nervous and sensational being which shrinks from the slaughter with its sequel of bloodstained enjoyments, the claim of his heart which recoils from the sorrow and emptiness of life that will follow his act, the claim of his customary moral notions which are appalled by the necessity of slaying his gurus, Bhishma and Drona, the claim of his reason which sees no good but only evil results of the terrible and violent work assigned to him. He is resolved that on the old basis of thought and motive he will not fight and he awaits in silence the answer to objections that seem to him unanswerable. It is these claims of Arjuna's egoistic being that Krishna sets out first to destroy in order to make place for the higher law which shall transcend all egoistic motives of action.

The answer of the Teacher proceeds upon two different lines, first, a brief reply founded upon the highest ideas of the general Aryan culture in which Arjuna has been educated, secondly, another and larger founded on a more intimate knowledge, opening into deeper truths of our being, which is the real starting-point of the teaching of the Gita.

This first answer relies on the philosophic and moral conceptions of the Vedantic philosophy and the social idea of duty and honour which formed the ethical basis of Aryan society. Arjuna has sought to justify his refusal on ethical and rational grounds, but he has merely cloaked by words of apparent rationality the revolt of his ignorant and unchastened emotions. He has spoken of the physical life and the death of the body as if these were the primary realities; but they have no such essential value to the sage and the thinker. The sorrow for the bodily death of his friends and kindred is a grief to which wisdom and the true knowledge of life lend no sanction. The enlightened man does not mourn either for the living or the dead, for he knows that suffering and death are merely incidents in the history of the soul. The soul, not the body, is the reality. All these kings of men for whose approaching death he mourns, have lived before, they will live again in the human body; for as the soul passes physically through childhood and youth and age, so it passes on to the changing of the body. The calm and wise mind, the *dhira,* the thinker who looks upon life steadily and does not allow himself to be disturbed and blinded by his sensations and emotions, is not deceived by material appearances; he does not allow the clamour of his blood and his nerves and his heart to cloud his judgment or to contradict his knowledge. He looks beyond the apparent facts of the life of the body and senses to the real fact of

his being and rises beyond the emotional and physical desires of the ignorant nature to the true and only aim of the human existence.

What is that real fact? that highest aim? This, that human life and death repeated through the aeons in the great cycles of the world are only a long progress by which the human being prepares and makes himself fit for immortality. And how shall he prepare himself? who is the man that is fit? The man who rises above the conception of himself as a life and a body, who does not accept the material and sensational touches of the world at their own value or at the value which the physical man attaches to them, who knows himself and all as souls, learns himself to live in his soul and not in his body and deals with others too as souls and not as mere physical beings. For by immortality is meant not the survival of death,—that is already given to every creature born with a mind,—but the transcendence of life and death. It means that ascension by which man ceases to live as a mind-informed body and lives at last as a spirit and in the Spirit. Whoever is subject to grief and sorrow, a slave to the sensations and emotions, occupied by the touches of things transient cannot become fit for immortality. These things must be borne until they are conquered, till they can give no pain to the liberated man, till he is able to receive all the material happenings of the world whether joyful or sorrowful with a wise and calm equality, even as the tranquil eternal Spirit secret within us receives

them. To be disturbed by sorrow and horror as Arjuna has been disturbed, to be deflected by them from the path that has to be travelled, to be overcome by self-pity and intolerance of sorrow and recoil from the unavoidable and trivial circumstance of the death of the body, this is un-Aryan ignorance. It is not the way of the Aryan climbing in calm strength towards the immortal life.

There is no such thing as death, for it is the body that dies and the body is not the man. That which really is, cannot go out of existence, though it may change the forms through which it appears, just as that which is non-existent cannot come into being. The soul is and cannot cease to be. This opposition of is and is not, this balance of being and becoming which is the mind's view of existence, finds its end in the realisation of the soul as the one imperishable self by whom all this universe has been extended. Finite bodies have an end, but that which possesses and uses the body, is infinite, illimitable, eternal, indestructible. It casts away old and takes up new bodies as a man changes worn-out raiment for new; and what is there in this to grieve at and recoil and shrink? This is not born, nor does it die, nor is it a thing that comes into being once and passing away will never come into being again. It is unborn, ancient, sempiternal; it is not slain with the slaying of the body. Who can slay the immortal spirit? Weapons cannot cleave it, nor the fire burn, nor do the waters drench it, nor the wind dry. Eternally stable, immobile,

all-pervading, it is for ever and for ever. Not manifested like the body, but greater than all manifestation, not to be analysed by the thought, but greater than all mind, not capable of change and modification like the life and its organs and their objects, but beyond the changes of mind and life and body, it is yet the Reality which all these strive to figure.

Even if the truth of our being were a thing less sublime, vast, intangible by death and life, if the self were constantly subject to birth and death, still the death of beings ought not to be a cause of sorrow. For that is an inevitable circumstance of the soul's self-manifestation. Its birth is an appearing out of some state in which it is not non-existent but unmanifest to our mortal senses, its death is a return to that unmanifest world or condition and out of it it will again appear in the physical manifestation. The to-do made by the physical mind and senses about death and the horror of death whether on the sickbed or the battlefield, is the most ignorant of nervous clamours. Our sorrow for the death of men is an ignorant grieving for those for whom there is no cause to grieve, since they have neither gone out of existence nor suffered any painful or terrible change of condition, but are beyond death no less in being and no more unhappy in circumstance than in life. But in reality the higher truth is the real truth. All are that Self, that One, that Divine whom we look on and speak and hear of as the wonderful beyond our com-

prehension, for after all our seeking and declaring of knowledge and learning from those who have knowledge no human mind has ever known this Absolute. It is this which is here veiled by the world, the master of the body; all life is only its shadow; the coming of the soul into physical manifestation and our passing out of it by death is only one of its minor movements. When we have known ourselves as this, then to speak of ourselves as slayer or slain is an absurdity. One thing only is the truth in which we have to live, the Eternal manifesting itself as the soul of man in the great cycle of its pilgrimage with birth and death for milestones, with worlds beyond as resting-places, with all the circumstances of life happy or unhappy as the means of our progress and battle and victory and with immortality as the home to which the soul travels.

Therefore, says the Teacher, put away this vain sorrow and shrinking, fight, O son of Bharata. But wherefore such a conclusion? This high and great knowledge, this strenuous self-discipline of the mind and soul by which it is to rise beyond the clamour of the emotions and the cheat of the senses to true self-knowledge, may well free us from grief and delusion; it may well cure us of the fear of death and the sorrow for the dead; it may well show us that those whom we speak of as dead are not dead at all nor to be sorrowed for, since they have only gone beyond; it may well teach us to look undisturbed upon the most terrible assaults of life

and upon the death of the body as a trifle; it may exalt us to the conception of all life's circumstances as a manifestation of the One and as a means for our souls to raise themselves above appearances by an upward evolution until we know ourselves as the immortal Spirit. But how does it justify the action demanded of Arjuna and the slaughter of Kurukshetra? The answer is that this is the action required of Arjuna in the path he has to travel; it has come inevitably in the performance of the function demanded of him by his *swadharma,* his social duty, the law of his life and the law of his being. This world, this manifestation of the Self in the material universe is not only a cycle of inner development, but a field in which the external circumstances of life have to be accepted as an environment and an occasion for that development. It is a world of mutual help and struggle; not a serene and peaceful gliding through easy joys is the progress it allows us, but every step has to be gained by heroic effort and through a clash of opposing forces. Those who take up the inner and the outer struggle even to the most physical clash of all, that of war, are the Kshatriyas, the mighty men; war, force, nobility, courage are their nature; protection of the right and an unflinching acceptance of the gage of battle is their virtue and their duty. For there is continually a struggle between right and wrong, justice and injustice, the force that protects and the force that violates and oppresses, and when this has once been brought to the issue of physical

strife, the champion and standard-bearer of the Right must not shake and tremble at the violent and terrible nature of the work he has to do; he must not abandon his followers or fellow-fighters, betray his cause and leave the standard of Right and Justice to trail in the dust and be trampled into mire by the bloodstained feet of the oppressor, because of a weak pity for the violent and cruel and a physical horror of the vastness of the destruction decreed. His virtue and his duty lie in battle and not in abstention from battle; it is not slaughter, but non-slaying which would here be the sin.

The Teacher then turns aside for a moment to give another answer to the cry of Arjuna over the sorrow of the death of kindred which will empty his life of the causes and objects of living. What is the true object of the Kshatriya's life and his true happiness? Not self-pleasing and domestic happiness and a life of comfort and peaceful joy with friends and relatives, but to battle for the right is his true object of life and to find a cause for which he can lay down his life or by victory win the crown and glory of the hero's existence is his greatest happiness. "There is no greater good for the Kshatriya than righteous battle, and when such a battle comes to them of itself like the open gate of heaven, happy are the Kshatriyas then. If thou doest not this battle for the right, then hast thou abandoned thy duty and virtue and thy glory, and sin shall be thy portion." He will by such a refusal incur disgrace and the reproach of fear and weakness

and the loss of his Kshatriya honour. For what is worst grief for a Kshatriya? It is the loss of his honour, his fame, his noble station among the mighty men, the men of courage and power ; that to him is much worse than death. Battle, courage, power, rule, the honour of the brave, the heaven of those who fall nobly, this is the warrior's ideal. To lower that ideal, to allow a smirch to fall on that honour, to give the example of a hero among heroes whose action lays itself open to the reproach of cowardice and weakness and thus to lower the moral standard of mankind, is to be false to himself and to the demand of the world on its leaders and kings. "Slain thou shalt win Heaven, victorious thou shalt enjoy the earth ; therefore arise, O son of Kunti, resolved upon battle."

This heroic appeal may seem to be on a lower level than the stoical spirituality which precedes and the deeper spirituality which follows ; for in the next verse the Teacher bids him to make grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat equal to his soul and then turn to the battle,—the real teaching of the Gita. But Indian ethics has always seen the practical necessity of graded ideals for the developing moral and spiritual life of man. The Kshatriya ideal, the ideal of the four orders is here placed in its social aspect, not as afterwards in its spiritual meaning This, says Krishna in effect, is my answer to you if you insist on joy and sorrow and the result of your actions as your motive of action. I have shown you in what direction the higher

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This heroic appeal may seem to be on a lower level than the stoical spirituality which precedes and the deeper spirituality which follows ; for in the next verse the Teacher bids him to make grief and happiness, loss and gain, victory and defeat equal to his soul and then turn to the battle,—the real teaching of the Gita. But Indian ethics has always seen the practical necessity of graded ideals for the developing moral and spiritual life of man. The Kshatriya ideal, the ideal of the four orders is here placed in its social aspect, not as afterwards in its spiritual meaning. This, says Krishna in effect, is my answer to you if you insist on joy and sorrow and the result of your actions as your motive of action. I have shown you in what direction the higher

knowledge of self and the world points you ; I have now shown you in what direction your social duty and the ethical standard of your order point you, *swadharmam api châvekshya.* Whichever you consider, the result is the same. But if you are not satisfied with your social duty and the virtue of your order, if you think that leads you to sorrow and sin, then I bid you rise to a higher and not sink to a lower ideal. Put away all egoism from you, disregard joy and sorrow, disregard gain and loss and all worldly results ; look only at the cause you must serve and the work that you must achieve by divine command ; "so thou shalt not incur sin." Thus Arjuna's plea of sorrow, his plea of the recoil from slaughter, his plea of the sense of sin, his plea of the unhappy results of his action, are answered according to the highest knowledge and ethical ideals to which his race and age had attained.

It is the creed of the Aryan fighter. "Know God," it says, "know thyself, help man ; protect the Right, do without fear or weakness or faltering thy work of battle in the world. Thou art the eternal and imperishable Spirit, thy soul is here on its upward path to immortality ; life and death are nothing, sorrow and wounds and suffering are nothing, for these things have to be conquered and overcome. Look not at thy own pleasure and gain and profit, but above and around, above at the shining summits to which thou climbest, around at this world of battle and trial in which good and evil, progress and retrogression are locked in stern

conflict. Men call to thee, their strong man, their hero for help ; help then, fight. Destroy when by destruction the world must advance, but hate not that which thou destroyest, neither grieve for all those who perish. Know everywhere the one self, know all to be immortal souls and the body to be but dust. Do thy work with a calm, strong and equal spirit ; fight and fall nobly or conquer mightily. For this is the work that God and thy nature have given to thee to accomplish."

VIII

SAṄKHYA AND YOGA

In the moment of his turning from this first and summary answer to Arjuna's difficulties and in the very first words which strike the keynote of a spiritual solution, the Teacher makes at once a distinction which is of the utmost importance for the understanding of the Gita,—the distinction of Sankhya and Yoga. "Such is the intelligence (the intelligent knowledge of things and will) declared to thee in the Sankhya, hear now this in the Yoga, for if thou art in Yoga by this intelligence, O son of Pritha, thou shalt cast away the bondage of works." That is the literal translation of the words in which the Gita announces the distinction it intends to make.

The Gita is in its foundation a Vedantic work; it is one of the three recognised authorities for the Vedantic teaching and, although not described as a revealed Scripture, although, that is to say, it is largely intellectual, ratiocinative, philosophical in its method, founded indeed on the Truth, but not the directly inspired Word which is the revelation of the Truth through the higher faculties of the seer, it is yet so highly esteemed as to be ranked almost as a thirteenth Upanishad. But still its Vedantic ideas are throughout and thoroughly coloured by the ideas

of the Sankhya and the Yoga way of thinking and it derives from this colouring the peculiar synthetic character of its philosophy. It is in fact primarily a practical system of Yoga that it teaches and it brings in metaphysical ideas only as explanatory of its practical system; nor does it merely declare Vedantic knowledge, but it founds knowledge and devotion upon works, even as it uplifts works to knowledge, their culmination, and informs them with devotion as their very heart and kernel of their spirit. Again its Yoga is founded upon the analytical philosophy of the Sankhyas, takes that as a starting-point and always keeps it as a large element of its method and doctrine; but still it proceeds far beyond it, negatives even some of its characteristic tendencies and finds a means of reconciling the lower analytical knowledge of Sankhya with the higher synthetic and Vedantic truth.

What, then, are the Sankhya and Yoga of which the Gita speaks? They are certainly not the systems which have come down to us under these names as enunciated respectively in the Sankhya Karika of Ishwara Krishna and the Yoga aphorisms of Patanjali. This Sankhya is not the system of the Karikas,—at least as that is generally understood; for the Gita nowhere for a moment admits the multiplicity of Purushas as a primal truth of being and it affirms emphatically what the traditional Sankhya strenuously denies, the One as Self and Purusha, that One again as the Lord, Ishwara or Purushottama, and Ishwara as the cause of the universe.

The traditional Sankhya is, to use our modern distinctions, atheistic; the Sankhya of the Gita admits and subtly reconciles the theistic, pantheistic and monistic views of the universe.

Nor is this Yoga the Yoga system of Patanjali; for that is a purely subjective method of Rajayoga, an internal discipline, limited, rigidly cut out, severely and scientifically graded, by which the mind is progressively stilled and taken up into Samadhi so that we may gain the temporal and eternal results of this self-exceeding, the temporal in a great expansion of the soul's knowledge and powers, the eternal in the divine union. But the Yoga of the Gita is a large, flexible and many-sided system with various elements, which are all successfully harmonised by a sort of natural and living assimilation, and of these elements Rajayoga is only one and not the most important and vital. This Yoga does not adopt any strict and scientific gradation but is a process of natural soul-development; it seeks by the adoption of a few principles of subjective poise and action to bring about a renovation of the soul and a sort of change, ascension or new birth out of the lower nature into the divine. Accordingly, its idea of Samadhi is quite different from the ordinary notion of the Yogic trance; and while Patanjali gives to works only an initial importance for moral purification and religious concentration, the Gita goes so far as to make works the distinctive characteristic of Yoga. Action to Patanjali is only a preliminary, in the Gita it is a permanent foundation; in the

Rajayoga it has practically to be put aside when its result has been attained or at any rate ceases very soon to be a means for the Yoga, for the Gita it is a means of the highest ascent and continues even after the complete liberation of the soul.

This much has to be said in order to avoid any confusion of thought that might be created by the use of familiar words in a connotation wider than the technical sense now familiar to us. Still, all that is essential in the Sankhya and Yoga systems, all in them that is large, catholic and universally true, is admitted by the Gita, even though it does not limit itself by them like the opposing schools. Its Sankhya is the catholic and Vedantic Sankhya such as we find it in its first principles and elements in the great Vedantic synthesis of the Upanishads and in the later developments of the Puranas. Its idea of Yoga is that large idea of a principally subjective practice and inner change, necessary for the finding of the Self or the union with God, of which the Rajayoga is only one special application. The Gita insists that Sankhya and Yoga are not two different, incompatible and discordant systems, but one in their principle and aim ; they differ only in their method and starting-point. The Sankhya also is a Yoga, but it proceeds by knowledge ; it starts, that is to say, by intellectual discrimination and analysis of the principles of our being and attains its aim through the vision and possession of the Truth. Yoga, on the other hand, proceeds by works ; it is in its first principle Karmayoga ; but it

is evident from the whole teaching of the Gita and its later definitions that the word *karma* is used in a very wide sense and that by Yoga is meant the selfless devotion of all the inner as well as the outer activities as a sacrifice to the Lord of all works, offered to the Eternal as Master of all the soul's energies and austerities. Yoga is the practice of the Truth of which Knowledge gives the vision, and its practice has for its motor-power a spirit of illumined devotion, of calm or fervent consecration to that which knowledge sees to be the Highest.

But what are the truths of Sankhya? The philosophy drew its name from its analytical process. Sankhya is the analysis, the enumeration, the separative and discriminative setting forth of the principles of our being of which the ordinary mind sees only the combinations and results of combination. It did not seek at all to synthetise. Its original standpoint is in fact dualistic, not with the very relative dualism of the Vedantic schools which call themselves by that name, Dwaita, but in a very absolute and trenchant fashion. For it explains existence not by one, but by two original principles whose inter-relation is the cause of the universe,—Purusha, the inactive, Prakriti, the active. Purusha is the Soul, not in the ordinary or popular sense of the word, but of pure conscious Being immobile, immutable and self-luminous. Prakriti is Energy and its process. Purusha does nothing, but it reflects the action of Energy and its processes; Prakriti is mechanical, but by being reflected in

Purusha it assumes the appearance of consciousness in its activities, and thus there are created those phenomena of creation, conservation, dissolution, birth and life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, sense-knowledge and intellectual knowledge and ignorance, action and inaction, happiness and suffering which the Purusha under the influence of Prakriti attributes to itself although they belong not at all to itself but to the action or movement of Prakriti alone.

For Prakriti is constituted of three *gunas* or essential modes of energy; sattwa, the seed of intelligence, conserves the workings of energy; rajas, the seed of force and action, creates the workings of energy; tamas, the seed of inertia and non-intelligence, the denial of sattwa and rajas, dissolves what they create and conserve. When these three powers of the energy of Prakriti are in a state of equilibrium, all is in rest, there is no movement, action or creation and there is therefore nothing to be reflected in the immutable luminous being of the conscious Soul. But when the equilibrium is disturbed, then the three gunas fall into a state of inequality in which they strive with and act upon each other and the whole inextricable business of ceaseless creation, conservation and dissolution begins, unrolling the phenomena of the cosmos. This continues so long as the Purusha consents to reflect the disturbance which obscures his eternal nature and attributes to it the nature of Prakriti; but when he withdraws his consent, the gunas fall into

equilibrium and the soul returns to its eternal, unchanging immobility; it is delivered from phenomena. This reflection and this giving or withdrawal of consent seem to be the only powers of Purusha; he is the witness of Nature by virtue of reflection and the giver of the sanction, *sakshî* and *anumantâ* of the Gita, but not actively the Ishwara. Even his giving of consent is passive and his withdrawing of consent is only another passivity. All action subjective or objective is foreign to the Soul; it has neither an active will nor an active intelligence. It cannot therefore be the sole cause of the cosmos and the affirmation of a second cause becomes necessary. Not Soul alone by its nature of conscious knowledge, will and delight is the cause of the universe, but Soul and Nature are the dual cause, a passive Consciousness and an active Energy. So the Sankhya explains the existence of the cosmos.

But whence then come this conscious intelligence and conscious will which we perceive to be so large a part of our being and which we commonly and instinctively refer not to the Prakriti, but to the Purusha? According to the Sankhya this intelligence and will are entirely a part of the mechanical energy of Nature and are not properties of the soul; they are the principle of Buddhi, one of the twenty-four *tattwas,* the twenty-four cosmic principles. Prakriti in the evolution of the world bases herself with her three gunas in her as the original substance of things, unmanifest, inconscient, out of which are evolved successively

five elemental conditions of energy or matter—for Matter and Force are the same in the Sankhya philosophy. These are called by the names of the five concrete elements of ancient thought, ether, air, fire, water and earth; but it must be remembered that they are not elements in the modern scientific sense but subtle conditions of material energy and nowhere to be found in their purity in the gross material world. All objects are created by the combination of these five subtle conditions or elements. Again, each of these five is the base of one of five subtle properties of energy or matter, sound, touch, form, taste and smell, which constitute the way in which the mind-sense perceives objects. Thus by these five elements of Matter put forth from primary energy and these five sense relations through which Matter is known is evolved what we would call in modern language the objective aspect of cosmic existence.

Thirteen other principles constitute the subjective aspect of the cosmic Energy,—Buddhi or Mahat, Ahankara, Manas and its ten sense-functions, five of knowledge, five of action. Manas, mind, is the original sense which perceives all objects and reacts upon them; for it has at once an inferent and an efferent activity, receives by perception what the Gita calls the outward touches of things, *bâhya sparsha,* and so forms its idea of the world and exercises its reactions of active vitality. But it specialises its most ordinary functions of reception by aid of the five perceptive senses of

hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell, which make the five properties of things their respective objects, and specialises certain necessary vital functions of reaction by aid of the five active senses which operate for speech, locomotion, the seizing of things, ejection and generation. Buddhi, the discriminating principle, is at once intelligence and will; it is that power in Nature which discriminates and coordinates. Ahankara, the ego-sense, is the subjective principle in Buddhi by which the Purusha is induced to identify himself with Prakriti and her activities. But these subjective principles are themselves as mechanical, as much a part of the inconscient energy as those which constitute her objective operations. If we find it difficult to realise how intelligence and will can be properties of the mechanical Inconscient and themselves mechanical (*jada*), we have only to remember that modern Science itself has been driven to the same conclusion. Even in the mechanical action of the atom there is a power which can only be called an inconscient will and in all the works of Nature that pervading will does inconsciently the works of intelligence. What we call mental intelligence is precisely the same thing in its essence as that which discriminates and coordinates subconsciously in all the activities of the material universe, and conscious Mind itself, Science has tried to demonstrate, is only a result and transcript of the mechanical action of the inconscient. But Sankhya explains what modern Science leaves in obscurity, the process by which

the mechanical and inconscient takes on the appearance of consciousness. It is because of the reflection of Prakriti in Purusha; the light of consciousness of the Soul is attributed to the workings of the mechanical energy and it is thus that the Purusha, observing Nature as the witness and forgetting himself, is deluded with the idea generated in her that it is he who thinks, feels, wills, acts, while all the time the operation of thinking, feeling, willing, acting is conducted really by her and her three modes and not by himself at all. To get rid of this delusion is the first step towards the liberation of the soul from Nature and her works.

There are certainly plenty of things in our existence which the Sankhya does not explain at all or does not explain satisfactorily, but if all we need is a rational explanation of the cosmic processes in their principles as a basis for the great object common to the ancient philosophies, the liberation of the soul from the obsession of cosmic Nature, then the Sankhya explanation of the world and the Sankhya way of liberation seem as good and as effective as any other. What we do not seize at first is why it should bring in an element of pluralism into its dualism by affirming one Prakriti, but many Purushas. It would seem that the existence of one Purusha and one Prakriti should be sufficient to account for the creation and procession of the universe. But the Sankhya was bound to evolve pluralism by its rigidly analytical observation of the principles of things. First, actually, we find that

there are many conscious beings in the world and each regards the same world in his own way and has his independent experience of its subjective and objective things, his separate dealings with the same perceptive and reactive processes. If there were only one Purusha, there would not be this central independence and separativeness, but all would see the world in an identical fashion and with a common subjectivity and objectivity. Because Prakriti is one, all witness the same world; because her principles are everywhere the same, the general principles which constitute internal and external experience are the same for all; but the infinite difference of view and outlook and attitude, action and experience and escape from experience—a difference not of the natural operations which are the same but of the witnessing consciousness,—are utterly inexplicable except on the supposition that there is a multiplicity of witnesses, many Purushas. The separative ego-sense, we may say, is a sufficient explanation? But the ego-sense is a common principle of Nature and need not vary; for by itself it simply induces the Purusha to identify himself with Prakriti, and if there is only one Purusha, all beings would be one, joined and alike in their egoistic consciousness; however different in detail might be the mere forms and combinations of their natural parts, there would be no difference of soul-outlook and soul-experience. The variations of Nature ought not to make all this central difference, this multiplicity of outlook and from beginning to end

this separateness of experience in one Witness, one Purusha. Therefore the pluralism of souls is a logical necessity to a pure Sankhya system divorced from the Vedantic elements of the ancient knowledge which first gave it birth. The cosmos and its process can be explained by the commerce of one Prakriti with one Purusha, but not the multiplicity of conscious beings in the cosmos.

There is another difficulty quite as formidable. Liberation is the object set before itself by this philosophy as by others. This liberation is effected, we have said, by the Purusha's withdrawal of his consent from the activities of Prakriti which she conducts only for his pleasure; but, in sum, this is only a way of speaking. The Purusha is passive and the act of giving or withdrawing consent cannot really belong to it, but must be a movement in Prakriti itself. If we consider, we shall see that it is, so far as it is an operation, a movement of reversal or recoil in the principle of Buddhi, the discriminative will. Buddhi has been lending itself to the perceptions of the mind-sense; it has been busy discriminating and coordinating the operations of the cosmic energy and by the aid of the ego-sense identifying the Witness with her works of thought, sense and action. It arrives by the process of discriminating things at the acid and dissolvent realisation that this identity is a delusion; it discriminates finally the Purusha from Prakriti and perceives that all is mere disturbance of the equilibrium of the gunas; the Buddhi, at once

intelligence and will, recoils from the falsehood which it has been supporting and the Purusha, ceasing to be bound, no longer associates himself with the interest of the mind in the cosmic play. The ultimate result will be that Prakriti will lose her power to reflect herself in the Purusha ; for the effect of the ego-sense is destroyed and the intelligent will becoming indifferent ceases to be the means of her sanction: necessarily then her gunas must fall into a state of equilibrium, the cosmic play must cease, the Purusha return to his immobile repose. But if there were only the one Purusha and this recoil of the discriminating principle from its delusions took place, all cosmos would cease. As it is, we see that nothing of the kind happens. A few beings among innumerable millions attain to liberation or move towards it ; the rest are in no way affected, nor is cosmic Nature in her play with them one whit inconvenienced by this summary rejection which should be the end of all her processes. Only by the theory of many independent Purushas can this fact be explained. The only at all logical explanation from the point of view of Vedantic monism is that of the Mayavada ; but there the whole thing becomes a dream, both bondage and liberation are circumstances of the unreality, the empirical blunderings of Maya ; in reality there is none freed, none bound. The more realistic Sankhya view of things does not admit this phantasmagoric idea of existence and therefore cannot adopt this solution. Here too we see that

the multiplicity of souls is an inevitable conclusion from the data of the Sankhya analysis of existence.

The Gita starts from this analysis and seems at first, even in its setting forth of Yoga, to accept it almost wholly. It accepts Prakriti and her three gunas and twenty-four principles; accepts the attribution of all action to the Prakriti and the passivity of the Purusha; accepts the multiplicity of conscious beings in the cosmos; accepts the dissolution of the identifying ego-sense, the discriminating action of the intelligent will and the transcendence of the action of the three modes of energy as the means of liberation. The Yoga which Arjuna is asked to practise from the outset is Yoga by the Buddhi, the intelligent will. But there is one deviation of capital importance,—the Purusha is regarded as one, not many; for the free, immaterial. immobile, eternal, immutable Self of the Gita, but for one detail, is a Vedantic description of the eternal, passive, immobile, immutable Purusha of the Sankhyas. But the capital difference is that there is One and not many. This brings in the whole difficulty which the Sankhya multiplicity avoids and necessitates a quite different solution. This the Gita provides by bringing into its Vedantic Sankhya the ideas and principles of Vedantic Yoga.

The first important new element we find is in the conception of Purusha itself. Prakriti conducts her activities for the pleasure of Purusha; but how is that pleasure determined? In the strict Sankhya analysis it can only be by a passive consent of the

silent Witness. Passively the Witness consents to the action of the intelligent will and the ego-sense, passively he consents to the recoil of that will from the ego-sense. He is Witness, source of the consent, by reflection upholder of the work of Nature, *sâkshî anumantâ bhartâ,* but nothing more. But the Purusha of the Gita is also the Lord of Nature ; he is Ishwara. If the operation of the intelligent will belongs to Nature, the origination and power of the will proceed from the conscious Soul ; he is the Lord of Nature. If the act of intelligence of the Will is the act of Prakriti, the source and light of the intelligence are actively contributed by the Purusha ; he is not only the Witness, but the Lord and Knower, master of knowledge and will, *jnâtâ îshvarah.* He is the supreme cause of the action of Prakriti, the supreme cause of its withdrawal from action. In the Sankhya analysis Purusha and Prakriti in their dualism are the cause of the cosmos ; in this synthetic Sankhya Purusha by *his* Prakriti is the cause of the cosmos. We see at once how far we have travelled from the rigid purism of the traditional analysis.

But what of the one self immutable, immobile, eternally free, with which the Gita began? That is free from all change or involution in change, *avikârya,* unborn, unmanifested, the Brahman, yet it is that "by which all this is extended." Therefore it would seem that the principle of the Ishwara is in its being ; if it is immobile, it is yet the cause and lord of all action and mobility. But how?

And what of the multiplicity of conscious beings in the cosmos? They do not seem to be the Lord, but rather very much not the Lord, *anîsh*, for they are subject to the action of the three gunas and the delusion of the ego-sense, and if, as the Gita seems to say, they are all the one self, how did this involution, subjection and delusion come about or how is it explicable except by the pure passivity of the Purusha? And whence the multiplicity? or how is it that the one self in one body and mind attains to liberation while in others it remains under the delusion of bondage? These are difficulties which cannot be passed by without a solution.

The Gita answers them in its later chapters by an analysis of Purusha and Prakriti which brings in new elements very proper to a Vedantic Yoga, but alien to the traditional Sankhya. It speaks of three Purushas or rather a triple status of the Purusha. The Upanishads in dealing with the truths of Sankhya seem sometimes to speak only of two Purushas. There is one unborn of three colours, says a text, the eternal feminine principle of Prakriti with its three gunas, ever creating; there are two unborn, two Purushas, of whom one cleaves to and enjoys her, the other abandons her because he has enjoyed all her enjoyments. In another verse they are described as two birds on one tree, eternally yoked companions, one of whom eats the fruits of the tree,—the Purusha in Nature enjoying her cosmos,—the other eats not, but watches his fellow, —the silent Witness, withdrawn from the enjoy-

ment; when the first sees the second and knows that all is his greatness, then he is delivered from sorrow. The point of view in the two verses is different, but they have a common implication. One of the birds is the eternally silent, unbound Self or Purusha by whom all this is extended and he regards the cosmos he has extended, but is aloof from it; the other is the Purusha involved in Prakriti. The first verse indicates that the two are the same, represent different states, bound and liberated, of the same conscious being,—for the second Unborn has descended into the enjoyment of Nature and withdrawn from her; the other verse brings out what we would not gather from the former, that in its higher status of unity the self is for ever free, inactive, unattached, though it descends in its lower being into the multiplicity of the creatures of Prakriti and withdraws from it by reversion in any individual creature to the higher status. This theory of the double status of the one conscious soul opens a door; but the process of the multiplicity of the One is still obscure.

To these two the Gita, developing the thought of other passages in the Upanishads,* adds yet another, the supreme, the Purushottama, the highest Purusha, whose greatness all this creation is. Thus there are three, the Kshara, the Akshara, the Uttama. Kshara, the mobile, the mutable is

* *Purushah.....aksharât.....paratah parah,*—although the Akshara is supreme, there is a supreme Purusha higher than it, says the Upanishad.

Nature, *swabhâva,* it is the various becoming of the soul; the Purusha here is the multiplicity of the divine Being; it is the Purusha multiple not apart from, but in Prakriti. Akshara, the immobile, the immutable, is the silent and inactive self, it is the unity of the divine Being, Witness of Nature, but not involved in its movement; it is the inactive Purusha free from Prakriti and her works. The Uttama is the Lord, the supreme Brahman, the supreme self, who possesses both the immutable unity and the mobile multiplicity. It is by a large mobility and action of His nature, His energy, His will and power, that He manifests Himself in the world and by a greater stillness and immobility of His being that He is aloof from it; yet is He as Purushottama above both the aloofness from Nature and the attachment to Nature. This idea of the Purushottama, though continually implied in the Upanishads, is disengaged and definitely brought out by the Gita and has exercised a powerful influence on the later developments of the Indian religious consciousness. It is the foundation of the highest Bhaktiyoga which claims to exceed the rigid definitions of monistic philosophy; it is at the back of the philosophy of the devotional Puranas.

The Gita is not content, either, to abide within the Sankhya analysis of Prakriti; for that makes room only for the ego-sense and not for the multiple Purusha, which is there not a part of Prakriti, but separate from her. The Gita affirms on the contrary that the Lord by His nature becomes the Jiva. How

IX

SANKHYA, YOGA AND VEDANTA

THE whole object of the first six chapters of the Gita is to synthetise in a large frame of Vedantic truth the two methods, ordinarily supposed to be diverse and even opposite, of the Sankhyas and the Yogins. The Sankhya is taken as the starting-point and the basis ; but it is from the beginning and with a progressively increasing emphasis permeated with the ideas and methods of Yoga and remoulded in its spirit. The practical difference, as it seems to have presented itself to the religious minds of that day, lay first in this that Sankhya proceeded by knowledge and through the Yoga of the intelligence, while Yoga proceeded by works and the transformation of the active consciousness and, secondly,—a corollary of this first distinction,—that Sankhya led to entire passivity and the renunciation of works, *sannyâsa,* while Yoga held to be quite sufficient the inner renunciation of desire, the purification of the subjective principle which leads to action and the turning of works Godwards, towards the divine existence and towards liberation. Yet both had the same aim, the transcendence of birth and of this terrestrial existence and the union of the human

soul with the Highest. This at least is the difference as it is presented to us by the Gita.

The difficulty which Arjuna feels in understanding any possible synthesis of these oppositions is an indication of the hard line that was driven in between these two systems in the normal ideas of the time. The Teacher sets out by reconciling works and the Yoga of the intelligence: the latter, he says, is far superior to mere works; it is by the Yoga of the Buddhi, by knowledge raising man out of the ordinary human mind and its desires into the purity and equality of the Brahmic condition free from all desire that works can be made acceptable. Yet are works a means of salvation, but works thus purified by knowledge. Filled with the notions of the then prevailing culture, misled by the emphasis which the Teacher lays upon the ideas proper to Vedantic Sankhya, conquest of the senses, withdrawal from mind into the Self, ascent into the Brahmic condition, extinction of our lower personality in the Nirvana of impersonality,—for the ideas proper to Yoga are as yet subordinated and largely held back,—Arjuna is perplexed and asks, "If thou holdest the intelligence to be greater than works, why then dost thou appoint me to a terrible work? Thou seemest to bewilder my intelligence with a confused and mingled speech; tell me then decisively that one thing by which I may attain to my soul's weal."

In answer Krishna affirms that the Sankhya goes by knowledge and renunciation, the Yoga by works;

but the real renunciation is impossible without Yoga, without works done as a sacrifice, done with equality and without desire of the fruit, with the perception that it is Nature which does the actions and not the soul; but immediately afterwards he declares that the sacrifice of knowledge is the highest, all work finds its consummation in knowledge, by the fire of knowledge all works are burnt up; therefore by Yoga works are renounced and their bondage overcome for the man who is in possession of his Self. Again Arjuna is perplexed; here are desireless works, the principle of Yoga, and renunciation of works, the principle of Sankhya, put together side by side as if part of one method, yet there is no evident reconciliation between them. For the kind of reconciliation which the Teacher has already given,—in outward inaction to see action still persisting and in apparent action to see a real inaction since the soul has renounced its illusion of the worker and given up works into the hands of the Master of sacrifice,—is for the practical mind of Arjuna too slight, too subtle and expressed almost in riddling words; he has not caught their sense or at least not penetrated into their spirit and reality. Therefore he asks again, "Thou declarest to me the renunciation of works, O Krishna, and again thou declarest to me Yoga; which one of these is the better way, that tell me with a clear decisiveness."

The answer is important, for it puts the whole distinction very clearly and indicates though it does

not develop entirely the line of reconciliation. "Renunciation and Yoga of works both bring about the soul's salvation, but of the two the Yoga of works is distinguished above the renunciation of works. He should be known as always a Sannyasin (even when he is doing action) who neither dislikes nor desires; for free from the dualities he is released easily and happily from the bondage. Children speak of Sankhya and Yoga apart from each other, not the wise; if a man applies himself integrally to one, he gets the fruit of both," because in their integrality each contains the other. "The status which is attained by the Sankhya, to that the men of the Yoga also arrive; who sees Sankhya and Yoga as one, he sees. But renunciation is difficult to attain without Yoga; the sage who has Yoga attains soon to the Brahman; his self becomes the self of all existences (of all things that have become), and even though he does works, he is not involved in them." He knows that the actions are not his, but Nature's and by that very knowledge he is free; he has renounced works, does no actions, though actions are done through him; he becomes the Self, the Brahman, *brahmabhûta,* he sees all existences as becomings (*bhûtâni*) of that self-existent Being, his own only one of them, all their actions as only the development of cosmic Nature working through their individual nature and his own actions also as a part of the same cosmic activity. This is not the whole teaching of the Gita; for as yet there is only the idea of the immutable self or Purusha, the Akshara Brahman,

and of Nature, Prakriti, as that which is responsible for the cosmos and not yet the idea, clearly expressed, of the Ishwara, the Purushottama ; as yet only the synthesis of works and knowledge and not yet, in spite of certain hints, the introduction of the supreme element of devotion which becomes so important afterwards ; as yet only the one inactive Purusha and the lower Prakriti and not yet the distinction of the triple Purusha and the double Prakriti. It is true the Ishwara is spoken of, but his relation to the self and nature is not yet made definite. The first six chapters only carry the synthesis so far as it can be carried without the clear expression and decisive entrance of these all-important truths which, when they come in, must necessarily enlarge and modify, though without abolishing, these first reconciliations.

Twofold, says Krishna, is the self-application of the soul by which it enters into the Brahmic condition: "that of the Sankhyas by the Yoga of knowledge, that of the Yogins by the Yoga of works." This identification of Sankhya with Jnanayoga and of Yoga with the way of works is interesting ; for it shows that quite a different order of ideas prevailed at that time from those we now possess as the result of the great Vedantic development of Indian thought, subsequent evidently to the composition of the Gita, by which the other Vedic philosophies fell into desuetude as practical methods of liberation. To justify the language of the Gita we must suppose that at that time it was the Sankhya method which

was very commonly* adopted by those who followed the path of knowledge. Subsequently, with the spread of Buddhism, the Sankhya method of knowledge must have been much overshadowed by the Buddhistic. Buddhism, like the Sankhya non-Theistic and anti-Monistic, laid stress on the impermanence of the results of the cosmic energy, which it presented not as Prakriti but as Karma because the Buddhists admitted neither the Vedantic Brahman nor the inactive Soul of the Sankhyas, and it made the recognition of this impermanence by the discriminating mind its means of liberation. When the reaction against Buddhism arrived, it took up not the old Sankhya notion, but the Vedantic form popularised by Shankara who replaced the Buddhistic impermanence by the cognate Vedantic idea of illusion, Maya, and the Buddhistic idea of Non-Being, indefinable Nirvana, a negative Absolute, by the opposite and yet cognate Vedantic idea of the indefinable Being, Brahman, an ineffably positive Absolute in which all feature and action and energy cease because in That they never really existed and are mere illusions of the mind. It is the method of Shankara based upon these concepts of his philosophy, it is the renunciation of life as an illusion of which we ordinarily think when we speak now of the Yoga of knowledge. But in the time of the Gita Maya was evidently not yet quite the master word

* The systems of the Puranas and Tantras are full of the ideas of the Sankhya, though subordinated to the Vedantic idea and mingled with many others.

of the Vedantic philosophy, nor had it, at least with any decisive clearness, the connotation which Shankara brought out of it with such a luminous force and distinctness ; for in the Gita there is little talk of Maya and much of Prakriti and, even, the former word is used as little more than an equivalent of the latter but only in its inferior status ; it is the lower Prakriti of the three gunas, *traigunyamayî mâyâ.* Prakriti, not illusive Maya, is in the teaching of the Gita the effective cause of cosmic existence.

Still, whatever the precise distinctions of their metaphysical ideas, the practical difference between the Sankhya and Yoga as developed by the Gita is the same as that which now exists between the Vedantic Yogas of knowledge and of works, and the practical results of the difference are also the same. The Sankhya proceeded like the Vedantic Yoga of knowledge by the Buddhi, by the discriminating intelligence ; it arrived by reflective thought, *vichâra,* at right discrimination, *viveka,* of the true nature of the soul and of the imposition on it of the works of Prakriti through attachment and identification, just as the Vedantic method arrives by the same means at the right discrimination of the true nature of the Self and of the imposition on it of cosmic appearances by mental illusion which leads to egoistic identification and attachment. In the Vedantic method Maya ceases for the soul by its return to its true and eternal status as the one Self, the Brahman, and the cosmic action disappears ; in

the Sankhya method the working of the *gunas* falls to rest by the return of the soul to its true and eternal status as the inactive Purusha and the cosmic action ends. The Brahman of the Mayavadins is silent, immutable and inactive ; so too is the Purusha of the Sankhya ; therefore for both ascetic renunciation of life and works is a necessary means of liberation. But for the Yoga of the Gita, as for the Vedantic Yoga of works, action is not only a preparation but itself the means of liberation ; and it is the justice of this view which the Gita seeks to bring out with such an unceasing force and insistence,—an insistence, unfortunately, which could not prevail in India against the tremendous tide of Buddhism,* was lost afterwards in the intensity of ascetic illusionism and the fervour of world-shunning saints and devotees and is only now beginning to exercise its real and salutary influence on the Indian mind. Renunciation is indispensable, but the true renunciation is the inner rejection of desire and egoism ; without that the outer physical abandoning of works is a thing unreal and ineffective, with it it ceases even to be necessary, although it is not forbidden. Knowledge is essential, there is no higher force for liberation, but works with knowledge are also needed ; by the union of knowledge and works the

* At the same time the Gita seems to have largely influenced Mahayanist Buddhism and texts are taken bodily from it into the Buddhist Scriptures. It may therefore have helped largely to turn Buddhism, originally a school of quietistic and illuminated ascetics, into that religion of meditative devotion and compassionate action which has so powerfully influenced Asiatic culture.

soul dwells entirely in the Brahmic status not only in repose and inactive calm, but in the very midst and stress and violence of action. Devotion is all-important, but works with devotion are also important; by the union of knowledge, devotion and works the soul is taken up into the highest status of the Ishwara to dwell there in the Purushottama who is master at once of the eternal spiritual calm and the eternal cosmic activity. This is the synthesis of the Gita.

But, apart from the distinction between the Sankhya way of knowledge and the Yoga way of works, there was another and similar opposition in the Vedanta itself, and this also the Gita has to deal with, to correct and to fuse into its large restatement of the Aryan spiritual culture. This was the distinction between Karmakanda and Jnanakanda, between the original thought that led to the philosophy of the Purva Mimansa, the Vedavada, and that which led to the philosophy of the Uttara Mimansa,* the Brahmavada, between those who dwelt in the tradition of the Vedic hymns and the Vedic sacrifice and those who put these aside as a lower knowledge and laid stress on the lofty metaphysical knowledge which emerges from the Upanishads. For the pragmatic mind of the Vedavadins the Aryan religion of the Rishis meant the

* Jaimini's idea of liberation is the eternal Brahmaloka in which the soul that has come to know Brahman still possesses a divine body and divine enjoyments. For the Gita the Brahmaloka is not liberation; the soul must pass beyond to the supracosmic status.

strict performance of the Vedic sacrifices and the use of the sacred Vedic mantras in order to possess all human desires in this world, wealth, progeny, victory, every kind of good fortune, and the joys of immortality in Paradise beyond. For the idealism of the Brahmavadins this was only a preliminary preparation and the real object of man, true *purushârtha,* began with his turning to the knowledge of the Brahman which would give him the true immortality of an ineffable spiritual bliss far beyond the lower joys of this world or of any inferior heaven. Whatever may have been the true and original sense of the Veda, this was the distinction which had long established itself and with which therefore the Gita has to deal.

Almost the first word of the synthesis of works and knowledge is a strong, almost a violent censure and repudiation of the Vedavada, "this flowery word which they declare who have not clear discernment, devoted to the creed of the Veda, whose creed is that there is nothing else, souls of desire, seekers of Paradise,—if gives the fruits of the works of birth, it is multifarious with specialities of rites, it is directed to enjoyment and lordship as its goal." The Gita even seems to go on to attack the Veda itself which, though it has been practically cast aside, is still to Indian sentiment intangible, inviolable, the sacred origin and authority for all its philosophy and religion. "The action of the three gunas is the subject matter of the Veda ; but do thou become free from the triple guna,

O Arjuna." The Vedas in the widest terms, "all the Vedas",—which might well include the Upanishads also and seems to include them, for the general term *Çruti* is used later on,—are declared to be unnecessary for the man who knows. "As much use as there is in a well with water in flood on every side, so much is there in all the Vedas for the Brahmin who has the knowledge." Nay, the Scriptures are even a stumbling-block ; for the letter of the Word—perhaps because of its conflict of texts and its various and mutually dissentient interpretations—bewilders the understanding, which can only find certainty and concentration by the light within. "When thy intelligence shall cross beyond the whorl of delusion, then shalt thou become indifferent to Scripture heard or that which thou hast yet to hear. *gantâsi nirvedam çrotavyasya çrutasya cha.* When thy intelligence which is bewildered by the Sruti, *çrutivipratipannâ,* shall stand unmoving and stable in Samadhi, then shalt thou attain to Yoga." So offensive is all this to conventional religious sentiment that attempts are naturally made by the convenient and indispensable human faculty of text-twisting to put a different sense on some of these verses, but the meaning is plain and hangs together from beginning to end. It is confirmed and emphasised by a subsequent passage in which the knowledge of the knower is described as passing beyond the range of Veda and Upanishad, *çabdabrahmâtivartate.*

Let us see, however, what all this means; for we may be sure that a synthetic and catholic system like the Gita's will not treat such important parts of the Aryan culture in a spirit of mere negation and repudiation. The Gita has to synthetise the Yoga doctrine of liberation by works and the Sankhya doctrine of liberation by knowledge; it has to fuse *karma* with *jnâna*. It has at the same time to synthetise the Purusha and Prakriti idea common to Sankhya and Yoga with the Brahmavada of the current Vedanta in which the Purusha, Deva, Ishwara,—supreme Soul, God, Lord,—of the Upanishads all became merged in the one all-swallowing concept of the immutable Brahman; and it has to bring out again from its overshadowing by that concept but not with any denial of it the Yoga idea of the Lord or Ishwara. It has too its own luminous thought to add, the crown of its synthetic system, the doctrine of the Purushottama and of the triple Purusha for which, though the idea is there, no precise and indisputable authority can be easily found in the Upanishads and which seems indeed at first sight to be in contradiction with that text of the Sruti where only two Purushas are recognised. Moreover, in synthetising works and knowledge it has to take account not only of the opposition of Yoga and Sankhya, but of the opposition of works to knowledge in Vedanta itself, where the connotation of the two words and therefore their point of conflict is not quite the same as the point of the Sankhya-Yoga opposition.

It is not surprising at all, one may observe in passing, that with the conflict of so many philosophical schools all founding themselves on the texts of the Veda and Upanishads, the Gita should describe the understanding as being perplexed and confused, led in different directions by the Sruti, *çrutivipratipannâ*. What battles are even now delivered by Indian pundits and metaphysicians over the meaning of the ancient texts and to what different conclusions they lead! The understanding may well get disgusted and indifferent, *gantâsi nirvedam*, refuse to hear any more texts new or old, *çrotavyasya, çrutasya cha*, and go into itself to discover the truth in the light of a deeper and inner and direct experience.

In the first six chapters the Gita lays a large foundation for its synthesis of works and knowledge, its synthesis of Sankhya, Yoga and Vedanta. But first it finds that *karma*, works, has a particular sense in the language of the Vedantins; it means the Vedic sacrifices and ceremonies or at most that and the ordering of life according to the Grihyasutras in which these rites are the most important part, the religious kernel of the life. By works the Vedantins understood these religious works, the sacrificial system, the *yajna*, full of a careful order, *vidhi*, of exact and complicated rites, *kriyâ-vishesha bahulâm*. But in Yoga works had a much wider significance. The Gita insists on this wider significance; in our conception of spiritual activity all works have to be included, *sarva-*

karmâni. At the same time it does not, like Buddhism, reject the idea of the sacrifice, it prefers to uplift and enlarge it. Yes, it says in effect, not only is sacrifice, *yajna,* the most important part of life, but all life, all works should be regarded as sacrifice, are *yajna,* though by the ignorant they are performed without the higher knowledge and by the most ignorant not in the true order, *avidhi-pûrvakam.* Sacrifice is the very condition of life; with sacrifice as their eternal companion the Father of creatures created the peoples. But the sacrifices of the Vedavadins are offerings of desire directed towards material rewards, desire eager for the result of works, desire looking to a larger enjoyment in Paradise as immortality and highest salvation. This the system of the Gita cannot admit; for that in its very inception starts with the renunciation of desire, with its rejection and destruction as the enemy of the soul. The Gita does not deny the validity even of the Vedic sacrificial works; it admits them, it admits that by these means one may get enjoyment here and Paradise beyond; it is I myself, says the divine Teacher, who accept these sacrifices and to whom they are offered, I who give these fruits in the form of the gods since so men choose to approach me. But this is not the true road, nor is the enjoyment of Paradise the liberation and fulfilment which man has to seek. It is the ignorant who worship the gods, not knowing whom they are worshipping ignorantly in these divine forms; for

they are worshipping, though in ignorance, the One, the Lord, the only Deva, and it is he who accepts their offering. To that Lord must the sacrifice be offered, the true sacrifice of all the life's energies and activities, with devotion, without desire, for His sake and for the welfare of the peoples. It is because the Vedavada obscures this truth and with its tangle of ritual ties man down to the action of the three gunas that it has to be so severely censured and put roughly aside; but its central idea is not destroyed; transfigured and uplifted, it is turned into a most important part of the true spiritual experience and of the method of liberation.

The Vedantic idea of knowledge does not present the same difficulties. The Gita takes it over at once and completely and throughout the six chapters quietly substitutes the still immutable Brahman of the Vedantins, the One without a second immanent in all cosmos, for the still immutable but multiple Purusha of the Sankhyas. It accepts throughout these chapters knowledge and realisation of the Brahman as the most important, the indispensable means of liberation, even while it insists on desireless works as an essential part of knowledge. It accepts equally Nirvana of the ego in the infinite equality of the immutable, impersonal Brahman as essential to liberation; it practically identifies this extinction with the Sankhya return of the inactive immutable Purusha upon itself when it emerges out of identification with the

actions of Prakriti; it combines and fuses the language of the Vedanta with the language of the Sankhya, as had already indeed been done by certain of the Upanishads.* But still there is a defect in the Vedantic position which has to be overcome. We may, perhaps, conjecture that at this time the Vedanta had not yet redeveloped the later theistic tendencies which in the Upanishads are already present as an element, but not so prominent as in the Vaishnava philosophies of the later Vedantins where they become indeed not only prominent but paramount. We may take it that the orthodox Vedanta was, at any rate in its main tendencies, pantheistic at the basis, monistic at the summit.† It knew of the Brahman, one without a second; it knew of the Gods, Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma and the rest, who all resolve themselves into the Brahman; but the one supreme Brahman as the one Ishwara, Purusha, Deva—words often applied to it in the Upanishads and justifying to that extent, yet passing beyond the Sankhya and the theistic conceptions—was an idea that had fallen from its pride of place;‡ the names could only be applied in a strictly logical Brahmavada to subordinate or inferior phases of the Brahman-idea.

* Especially the Swetaswatara.

† The pantheistic formula is that God and the All are one, the monistic adds that God or Brahman alone exists and the cosmos is only an illusory appearance or else a real but partial manifestation.

‡ This is a little doubtful, but we may say at least that there was a strong tendency in that direction of which Shankara's philosophy was the last culmination.

The Gita proposes not only to restore the original equality of these names and therefore of the conceptions they indicate, but to go a step farther. The Brahman in its supreme and not in any lower aspect has to be presented as the Purusha with the lower Prakriti for its Maya, so to synthetise thoroughly Vedanta and Sankhya, and as Ishwara, so to synthetise thoroughly both with Yoga ; but the Gita is going to represent the Ishwara, the Purushottama, as higher even than the still and immutable Brahman, and the loss of ego in the impersonal comes in at the beginning as only a great initial and necessary step towards union with the Purushottama. For the Purushottama is the supreme Brahman. It therefore passes boldly beyond the Veda and the Upanishads as they were taught by their best authorised exponents and affirms a teaching of its own which it has developed from them, but which may not be capable of being fitted in within the four corners of their meaning as ordinarily interpreted by the Vedantins.* In fact without this free and synthetic dealing with the letter of the Scripture a work of large synthesis in the then state of conflict between numerous schools

* In reality the idea of the Purushottama is already announced in the Upanishads, though in a more scattered fashion than in the Gita and, as in the Gita, the Supreme Brahman or Supreme Purusha is constantly described as containing in himself the opposition of the Brahman with qualities and without qualities, *nirguna guni*. He is not one of these things to the exclusion of the other which seems to our intellect to be its contrary.

and with the current methods of Vedic exegesis would have been impossible.

The Gita in later chapters speaks highly of the Veda and the Upanishads. They are divine Scriptures, they are the Word. The Lord himself is the knower of Veda and the author of Vedanta, *vedavid vedântakrit;* the Lord is the one object of knowledge in all the Vedas, *sarvair vedair aham eva vedyah,* a language which implies that the word Veda means the book of knowledge and that these Scriptures deserve their appellation. The Purushottama from his high supremacy above the Immutable and the mutable has extended himself in the world and in the Veda. Still the letter of the Scripture binds and confuses, as the apostle of Christianity warned his disciples when he said that the letter killeth and it is the spirit that saves; and there is a point beyond which the utility of the Scripture itself ceases. The real source of knowledge is the Lord in the heart; "I am seated in the heart of every man and from me is knowledge," says the Gita; the Scripture is only a verbal form of that inner Veda, of that self-luminous Reality, it is *shabdabrahma:* the mantra, says the Veda, has risen from the heart, from the secret place where is the seat of the truth, *sadanâd r'itasya, guhâyâm.* That origin is its sanction; but still the infinite Truth is greater than its word. Nor shall you say of any Scripture that it alone is all-sufficient and no other truth can be admitted, as the Vedavadins said of the Veda, *nânyad astîti vâdinah.* This is a

saving and liberating word which must be applied to all the Scriptures of the world. Take all the Scriptures that are or have been, Bible and Koran and the books of the Chinese, Veda and Upanishads and Purana and Tantra and Shastra and the Gita itself and the sayings of thinkers and sages, prophets and Avatars, still you shall not say that there is nothing else or that the truth your intellect cannot find there is not true because you cannot find it there. That is the limited thought of the sectarian or the composite thought of the eclectic religionist, not the untrammelled truth-seeking of the free and illumined mind and God-experienced soul. Heard or unheard before, that always is the truth which is seen by the heart of man in its illumined depths or heard within from the Master of all knowledge, the knower of the eternal Veda.

X

THE YOGA OF THE INTELLIGENT WILL

I HAVE had to deviate in the last two essays and to drag the reader with me into the arid tracts of metaphysical dogma,—however cursorily and with a very insufficient and superficial treatment,—so that we might understand why the Gita follows the peculiar line of development it has taken, working out first a partial truth with only subdued hints of its deeper meaning, then returning upon its hints and bringing out their significance until it rises to its last great suggestion, its supreme mystery which it does not work out at all, but leaves to be lived out, as the later ages of Indian spirituality tried to live it out in great waves of love, of surrender, of ecstasy. Its eye is always on its synthesis and all its strains are the gradual preparation of the mind for its high closing note.

I have declared to you the poise of a self-liberating intelligence in Sankhya, says the divine Teacher to Arjuna. I will now declare to you another poise in Yoga. You are shrinking from the results of your works, you desire other results and turn from your right path in life because it does not lead you to them. But this idea of works and their result, desire of result as the motive, the work as a

means for the satisfaction of desire, is the bondage of the ignorant who know not what works are, nor their true source, nor their real operation, nor their high utility. My Yoga will free you from all bondage of the soul to its works, *karmabandham prahâsyasi*. You are afraid of many things, afraid of sin, afraid of suffering, afraid of hell and punishment, afraid of God, afraid of this world, afraid of the hereafter, afraid of yourself. What is it that you are not afraid of at this moment, you the Aryan fighter, the world's chief hero? But this is the great fear which besieges humanity, its fear of sin and suffering now and hereafter, its fear in a world of whose true nature it is ignorant, of a God whose true being also it has not seen and whose cosmic purpose it does not understand. My Yoga will deliver you from the great fear and even a little of it will bring deliverance. When you have once set out on this path, you will find that no step is lost; every least movement will be a gain; you will find there no obstacle that can baulk you of your advance. A bold and absolute promise and one to which the fearful and hesitating mind beset and stumbling in all its paths cannot easily lend an assured trust; nor is the large and full truth of it apparent unless with these first words of the message of the Gita we read also the last, "Abandon all laws of conduct and take refuge in Me alone; I will deliver you from all sin and evil; do not grieve."

But it is not with this deep and moving word of God to man, but rather with the first necessary rays of light on the path, directed not like that to the soul, but to the intellect, that the exposition begins. Not the Friend and Lover of man speaks first, but the guide and teacher who has to remove from him his ignorance of his true self and of the nature of the world and of the springs of his own action. For it is because he acts ignorantly, with a wrong intelligence and therefore a wrong will in these matters, that man is or seems to be bound by his works; otherwise works are no bondage to the free soul. It is because of this wrong intelligence that he has hope and fear, wrath and grief and transient joy; otherwise works are possible with a perfect serenity and freedom. Therefore it is the Yoga of the buddhi, the intelligence, that is first enjoined on Arjuna. To act with right intelligence and, therefore, a right will, fixed in the One, aware of the one self in all and acting out of its equal serenity, not running about in different directions under the thousand impulses of our superficial mental self, is the Yoga of the intelligent will.

There are, says the Gita, two types of intelligence in the human being. The first is concentrated, poised, one, homogeneous, directed singly towards the Truth; unity is its characteristic, concentrated fixity is its very being. In the other there is no single will, no unified intelligence, but only an endless number of ideas many-branching, coursing about, that is to say, in this or that direction

in pursuit of the desires which are offered to it by life and by the environment. Buddhi, the word used, means, properly speaking, the mental power of understanding but it is evidently used by the Gita in a large philosophic sense for the whole action of the discriminating and deciding mind which determines both the direction and use of our thoughts and the direction and use of our acts; thought, intelligence, judgment, perceptive choice and aim are all included in its functioning: for the characteristic of the unified intelligence is not only concentration of the mind that knows, but especially concentration of the mind that decides and persists in the decision, *vyavasâya,* while the sign of the dissipated intelligence is not so much even discursiveness of the ideas and perceptions as discursiveness of the aims and desires, therefore of the will. Will, then, and knowledge are the two functions of the Buddhi. The unified intelligent will is fixed in the enlightened soul, it is concentrated in inner self-knowledge; the many-branching and multifarious, busied with many things, careless of the one thing needful is on the contrary subject to the restless and discursive action of the mind, dispersed in outward life and works and their fruits. "Works are far inferior," says the Teacher, "to Yoga of the intelligence; desire rather refuge in the intelligence; poor and wretched souls are they who make the fruit of their works the object of their thoughts and activities."

We must remember the psychological order of the Sankhya which the Gita accepts. On one side there is the Purusha, the soul calm, inactive, immutable, one, not evolutive ; on the other side there is Prakriti or Nature-force inert without the conscious Soul, active but only by juxtaposition to that consciousness, by contact with it, as we would say, not so much one at first as indeterminate, triple in its qualities, capable of evolution and involution. The contact of soul and nature generates the play of subjectivity and objectivity which is our experience of being ; what is to us the subjective first evolves, because the soul-consciousness is the first cause, inconscient Nature-force only the second and dependent cause ; but still it is Nature and not Soul which supplies the instruments of our subjectivity. First in order come Buddhi, discriminative or determinative power evolving out of Nature-force, and its subordinate power of self-discriminating ego. Then as a secondary evolution there arises out of these the power which seizes the discriminations of objects, sense-mind or Manas,—we must record the Indian names because the corresponding English words are not real equivalents. As a tertiary evolution out of sense-mind we have the specialising organic senses, ten in number, five of perception, five of action ; next the powers of each sense of perception, sound, form, scent, etc., which give their value to objects for the mind and make things what they are to our subjectivity,—and, as the substantial basis of these,

the primary conditions of the objects of sense, the five elements of ancient philosophy or rather elementary conditions of Nature, *pancha bhûta,* which constitute objects by their various combination.

Reflected in the pure consciousness of Purusha these degrees and powers of Nature-force become the material of our impure subjectivity, impure because its action is dependent on the perceptions of the objective world and on their subjective reactions. Buddhi, which is simply the determinative power that determines all inertly out of indeterminate inconscient Force, takes for us the form of intelligence and will. Manas, the inconscient force which seizes Nature's discriminations by objective action and reaction and grasps at them by attraction, becomes sense-perception and desire, the two crude terms or degradations of intelligence and will,—becomes the sense-mind sensational, emotive, volitional in the lower sense of wish, hope, longing passion, vital impulsion, all the deformations (*vikâra*) of will. The senses become the instruments of sense-mind, the perceptive five of our sense-knowledge, the active five of our impulsions and vital habits, mediators between the subjective and objective ; the rest are the objects of our consciousness, *vishayas* of the senses.

This order of evolution seems contrary to that which we perceive as the order of the material evolution ; but if we remember that even Buddhi is in itself an inert action of inconscient Nature

and that there is certainly in this sense an inconscient will and intelligence, a discriminative and determinative force even in the atom, if we observe the crude inconscient stuff of sensation, emotion, memory, impulsion in the plant and in the subconscient forms of existence, if we look at these powers of Nature-force assuming the forms of our subjectivity in the evolving consciousness of animal and man, we shall see that the Sankhya system squares well enough with all that modern enquiry has elicited by its observation of material Nature. In the evolution of the soul back from Prakriti towards Purusha, the reverse order has to be taken to the original Nature-evolution, and that is how the Upanishads and the Gita following and almost quoting the Upanishads state the ascending order of our subjective powers. "Supreme," they say, "beyond their objects are the senses, supreme over the senses the mind, supreme over the mind the intelligent will: that which is supreme over the intelligent will, is he,"—is the conscious self, the Purusha. Therefore, says the Gita, it is this Purusha, this supreme cause of our subjective life which we have to understand and become aware of by the intelligence ; in that we have to fix our will. So holding our lower subjective self in Nature firmly poised and stilled by means of the greater really conscient self, we can destroy the restless ever-active enemy of our peace and self-mastery, the mind's desire.

For evidently there are two possibilities of the action of the intelligent will. It may take its downward and outward orientation towards a discursive action of the perceptions and the will in the triple play of Prakriti, or it may take its upward and inward orientation towards a settled peace and equality in the calm and immutable purity of the conscious, silent soul no longer subject to the distractions of Nature. In the former alternative the subjective being is at the mercy of the objects of sense, it lives in the outward contact of things. That life is the life of desire. For the senses excited by their objects create a restless or often violent disturbance, a strong or even headlong outward movement towards the seizure of these objects and their enjoyment, and they carry away the sense-mind, "as the winds carry away a ship upon the sea" ; the mind subjected to the emotions, passions, longings, impulsions awakened by this outward movement of the senses carries away similarly the intelligent will, which loses therefore its power of calm discrimination and mastery. Subjection of the soul to the confused play of the three gunas of Prakriti in their eternal entangled twining and wrestling, ignorance, a false, sensuous, objective life of the soul, enslavement to grief and wrath and attachment and passion, are the results of the downward trend of the buddhi,—the troubled life of the ordinary, unenlightened, undisciplined man. Those who like the Vedavadins make sense-enjoyment the object of action and its fulfilment the highest aim

of the soul, are misleading guides. The inner subjective self-delight independent of objects is our true aim and the high and wide poise of our peace and liberation.

Therefore, it is the upward and inward orientation of the intelligent will that we must resolutely choose with a settled concentration and perseverance, *vyavasâya ;* we must fix it firmly in the calm self-knowledge of the Purusha. The first movement must be obviously to get rid of desire which is the whole root of the evil and suffering ; and in order to get rid of desire, we must put an end to the cause of desire, the rushing out of the senses to seize and enjoy their objects. We must draw them back when they are inclined thus to rush out, draw them away from their objects,—as the tortoise draws in his limbs into the shell, so these into their source, quiescent in the mind, the mind quiescent in intelligence, the intelligence quiescent in the soul and its self-knowledge, observing the action of Nature, but not subject to it, not desiring anything that the objective life can give.

It is not an external asceticism, the physical renunciation of the objects of sense that I am teaching, suggests Krishna immediately to avoid a misunderstanding which is likely at once to arise. Not the renunciation of the Sankhyas or the austerities of the rigid ascetic with his fasts, his maceration of the body, his attempt to abstain even from food ; that is not the self-discipline or the abstinence which I mean, for I speak of an inner withdrawal, a renun-

ciation of desire. The embodied soul, having a body, has to support it normally by food for its normal physical action; by abstention from food it simply removes from itself the physical contact with the object of sense, but does not get rid of the inner relation which makes that contact hurtful. It retains the pleasure of the sense in the object, the *rasa,* the liking and disliking,—for *rasa* has two sides; the soul must, on the contrary, be capable of enduring the physical contact without suffering inwardly this sensuous reaction. Otherwise there is *nivritti,* cessation of the object, *vishayâ vinivartante,* but no subjective cessation, no *nivritti* of the mind; but the senses are of the mind, subjective, and subjective cessation of the *rasa* is the only real sign of mastery. But how is this desireless contact with objects, this unsensuous use of the senses possible? It is possible, *param drishtwâ,* by the vision of the supreme,—*paraṁ,* the Soul, the Puṛusha,—and by living in the Yoga, in union or oneness of the whole subjective being with that, through the Yoga of the intelligence; for the one Soul is calm, satisfied in its own delight, and that delight free from duality can take, once we see this supreme thing in us and fix the mind and will on that, the place of the sensuous object-ridden pleasures and repulsions of the mind. This is the true way of liberation.

Certainly self-discipline, self-control is never easy. All intelligent human beings know that they must exercise some control over themselves and nothing is more common than this advice to control the

senses ; but ordinarily it is only advised imperfectly and practised imperfectly in the most limited and insufficient fashion. Even, however, the sage, the man of clear, wise and discerning soul who really labours to acquire complete self-mastery finds himself hurried and carried away by the senses. That is because the mind naturally lends itself to the senses ; it observes the objects of sense with an inner interest, settles upon them and makes them the object of absorbing thought for the intelligence and of strong interest for the will. By that attachment comes, by attachment desire, by desire distress, passion and anger when the desire is not satisfied or is thwarted or opposed, and by passion the soul is obscured, the intelligence and will forget to see and be seated in the calm observing soul ; there is a fall from the memory of one's true self, and by that lapse the intelligent will is also obscured, destroyed even. For, for the time being, it no longer exists to our memory of ourselves, it disappears in a cloud of passion ; we become passion, wrath, grief and cease to be self and intelligence and will. This then must be prevented and all the senses brought utterly under control ; for only by an absolute control of the senses can the wise and calm intelligence be firmly established in its proper seat.

This cannot be done perfectly by the act of the intelligence itself, by a merely mental self-discipline ; it can only be done by Yoga with something which is higher than itself and in which calm and self-mastery are inherent. And this Yoga can only

arrive at its success by devoting, by consecrating, by giving up the whole self to the Divine, "to Me," says Krishna ; for the Liberator is within us, but it is not our mind, nor our intelligence, nor our personal will,—they are only instruments. It is the Lord in whom, as we are told in the end, we have utterly to take refuge. And for that we must at first make him the object of our whole being and keep in soul-contact with him. This is the sense of the phrase "he must sit firm in Yoga, wholly given up to Me" ; but as yet it is the merest passing hint after the manner of the Gita, three words only which contain in seed the whole gist of the highest secret yet to be developed. *yukta âsîta matparah.*

If this is done, then it becomes possible to move among the objects of sense, in contact with them, acting on them, but with the senses entirely under the control of the subjective self,—not at the mercy of the objects and their contacts and reactions,—and that self again obedient to the highest self, the Purusha. Then, free from reactions, the senses will be delivered from the affections of liking and disliking, escape the duality of positive and negative desire, and calm, peace, clearness, happy tranquillity, *âtmaprasâda,* will settle upon the man. That clear tranquillity is the source of the soul's felicity ; all grief begins to lose its power of touching the tranquil soul ; the intelligence is rapidly established in the peace of the self ; suffering is destroyed. It is this calm, desireless, griefless fixity of the buddhi

in self-poise and self-knowledge to which the Gita gives the name of Samadhi.

The sign of the man in Samadhi is not that he loses consciousness of objects and surroundings and of his mental and physical self and cannot be recalled to it even by burning or torture of the body,—the ordinary idea of the matter; trance is a particular intensity, not the essential sign. The test is the expulsion of all desires, their inability to get at the mind, and it is the inner state from which this freedom arises, the delight of the soul gathered within itself with the mind equal and still and high-poised above the attractions and repulsions, the alternations of sunshine and storm and stress of the external life. It is drawn inward even when acting outwardly; it is concentrated in self even when gazing out upon things; it is directed wholly to the Divine even when to the outward vision of others busy and preoccupied with the affairs of the world. Arjuna, voicing the average human mind, asks for some outward, physical, practically discernible sign of this great Samadhi; how does such a man speak, how sit, how walk? No such signs can be given, nor does the Teacher attempt to supply them; for the only possible test of its possession is inward and that there are plenty of hostile psychological forces to apply. Equality is the great stamp of the liberated soul and of that equality even the most discernible signs are still subjective. "A man with mind untroubled by sorrows, who has done with desire

for pleasures, from whom liking and wrath and fear have passed away, such is the sage whose understanding has become founded in stability." He is "without the triple action of the qualities of Prakriti, without the dualities, ever based in his true being, without getting or having, possessed of his self." For what gettings and havings has the free soul? Once we are possessed of the Self, we are in possession of all things.

And yet he does not cease from work and action. There is the originality and power of the Gita, that having affirmed this static condition, this superiority to nature, this emptiness even of all that constitutes ordinarily the action of Nature for the liberated soul, it is still able to vindicate for it, to enjoin on it even the continuance of works and thus avoid the great defect of the merely quietistic and ascetic philosophies,—the defect from which we find them to-day attempting to escape. "Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits; let not the fruits of thy works be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inactivity." Therefore it is not the works practised with desire by the Vedavadins, it is not the claim for the satisfaction of the restless and energetic mind by a constant activity, the claim made by the practical or the kinetic man, which is here enjoined. "Fixed in Yoga do thy actions, having abandoned attachment, having become equal in failure and success; for it is equality that is meant by Yoga." Action is distressed by the choice

between a relative good and evil, the fear of sin and the difficult endeavour towards virtue? But the liberated who has united his reason and will with the Divine, casts away from him even here in this world of dualities both good doing and evil doing; for he rises to a higher law beyond good and evil, founded in the liberty of self-knowledge. Such desireless action can have no decisiveness, no effectiveness, no efficient motive, no large or vigorous creative power? Not so; action done in Yoga is not only the highest but the wisest, the most potent and efficient even for the affairs of the world; for it is informed by the knowledge and will of the Master of works: "Yoga is skill in works." But all action directed towards life leads away from the universal aim of the Yogin which is by common consent to escape from bondage to this distressed and sorrowful human birth? Not so, either; the sages who do works without desire for fruits and in Yoga with the Divine are liberated from the bondage of birth and reach that other perfect status in which there are none of the maladies which afflict the mind and life of a suffering humanity.

The status he reaches is the Brahmic condition; he gets to firm standing in the Brahman, *brâhmî sthiti*. It is a reversal of the whole view, experience, knowledge, values, seeings of earth-bound creatures. This life of the dualities which is to them their day, their waking, their consciousness, their bright condition of activity and knowledge, is to him a night, a troubled sleep and darkness of the soul;

that higher being which is to them a night, a sleep in which all knowledge and will cease, is to the self-mastering sage his waking, his luminous day of true being, knowledge and power. They are troubled and muddy waters disturbed by every little inrush of desire; he is an ocean of wide being and consciousness which is ever being filled, yet ever motionless in its large poise of his soul; all the desires of the world enter into him as waters into the sea, yet he has no desire nor is troubled. For while they are filled with the troubling sense of ego and mine and thine, he is one with the one Self in all and has no "I" or "mine". He acts as others, but he has abandoned all desires and their longings. He attains to the great peace and is not bewildered by the shows of things; he has extinguished his individual ego in the One, lives in that unity and, fixed in that status at his end, can attain to extinction in the Brahman, Nirvana,—not the negative self-annihilation of the Buddhists, but the great immergence of the separate personal self into the vast reality of the one infinite impersonal Existence.

Such, subtly unifying Sankhya, Yoga and Vedanta, is the first foundation of the teaching of the Gita. It is far from being all, but it is the first indispensable practical unity of knowledge and works with a hint already of the third crowning intensest element in the soul's completeness, divine love and devotion.

XI

WORKS AND SACRIFICE

THE Yoga of the intelligent will and its culmination in the Brahmic status, which occupies all the close of the second chapter, contains the seed of much of the teaching of the Gita,—its doctrine of desireless works, of equality, of the rejection of outward renunciation, of devotion to the Divine; but as yet all this is slight and obscure. What is most strongly emphasised as yet is the withdrawal of the will from the ordinary motive of human activities, desire, from man's normal temperament of the sense-seeking thought and will with its passions and ignorance, and from its customary habit of troubled many-branching ideas and wishes to the desireless calm unity and passionless serenity of the Brahmic poise. So much Arjuna has understood. He is not unfamiliar with all this; it is the substance of the current teaching which points man to the path of knowledge and to the renunciation of life and works as his way of perfection. The intelligence withdrawing from sense and desire and human action and turning to the Highest, to the One, to the actionless Purusha, to the immobile, to the featureless Brahman, that surely is the eternal seed of knowledge. There is no room here for

works, since works belong to the Ignorance; action is the very opposite of knowledge; its seed is desire and its fruit is bondage. That is the orthodox philosophical doctrine, and Krishna seems quite to admit it when he says that works are far inferior to the Yoga of the intelligence. And yet works are insisted upon as part of the Yoga; so that there seems to be in this teaching a radical inconsistency. Not only so; for some kind of work no doubt may persist for a while, the minimum, the most inoffensive; but here is a work wholly inconsistent with knowledge, with serenity and with the motionless peace of the self-delighted soul,—a work terrible, even monstrous, a bloody strife, a ruthless battle, a giant massacre. Yet it is this that is enjoined, this that it is sought to justify by the teaching of inner peace and desireless equality and status in the Brahman! Here then is an unreconciled contradiction. Arjuna complains that he has been given a contradictory and confusing doctrine, not the clear, strenuously single road by which the human intelligence can move straight and trenchantly to the supreme good. It is in answer to this objection that the Gita begins at once to develop more clearly its positive and imperative doctrine of Works.

The Teacher first makes a distinction between the two means of salvation on which in this world men can concentrate separately, the Yoga of knowledge, the Yoga of works, the one implying, it is usually supposed, renunciation of works as an

obstacle to salvation, the other accepting works as a means of salvation. He does not yet insist strongly on any fusion of them, on any reconciliation of the thought that divides them, but begins by showing that the renunciation of the Sankhyas, the physical renunciation, Sannyasa, is neither the only way, nor at all the better way. *Naishkarmya,* a calm voidness from works, is no doubt that to which the soul, the Purusha has to attain; for it is Prakriti which does the work and the soul has to rise above involution in the activities of the being and attain to a free serenity and poise watching over the operations of Prakriti, but not affected by them. That, and not cessation of the works of Prakriti, is what is really meant by the soul's *naishkarmya.* Therefore it is an error to think that by not engaging in any kind of action this actionless state of the soul can be attained and enjoyed. Mere renunciation of works is not a sufficient, not even quite a proper means for salvation. "Not by abstention from works does a man enjoy actionlessness, nor by mere renunciation (of works) does he attain to his perfection."—to *siddhi,* the accomplishment of the aims of his self-discipline by Yoga.

But at least it must be one necessary means, indispensable, imperative? For how, if the works of Prakriti continue, can the soul help being involved in them? How can I fight and yet in my soul not think or feel that I the individual am fighting, not desire victory nor be inwardly touched by defeat? This is the teaching of the Sankhyas

that the intelligence of the man who engages in the activities of Nature, is entangled in egoism, ignorance and desire and therefore drawn to action; on the contrary, if the intelligence draws back, then the action must cease with the cessation of the desire and the ignorance. Therefore the giving up of life and works is a necessary part, an inevitable circumstance and an indispensable last means of the movement to liberation. This objection of a current logic—it is not expressed by Arjuna, but it is in his mind as the turn of his subsequent utterances shows,—the Teacher immediately anticipates. No, he says, such renunciation, far from being indispensable, is not even possible. "For none stands even for a moment not doing work; everyone is made to do action helplessly by the modes born of Prakriti." The strong perception of the great cosmic action and the eternal activity and power of the cosmic energy which was so much emphasised afterwards by the teaching of the Tantric Shaktas who even made Prakriti or Shakti superior to Purusha, is a very remarkable feature of the Gita. Although here an undertone, it is still strong enough, coupled with what we might call the theistic and devotional elements of its thought, to bring in that activism which so strongly modifies in its scheme of Yoga the quietistic tendencies of the old metaphysical Vedanta. Man embodied in the natural world cannot cease from action, not for a moment, not for a second; his very existence here is an action; the whole universe

is an act of God, mere living even is His movement.

Our physical life, its maintenance, its continuance is a journey, a pilgrimage of the body, *sharîra-yâtrâ,* and that cannot be effected without action. But even if a man could leave his body unmaintained, otiose, if he could stand still always like a tree or sit inert like a stone, *tisthati,* that vegetable or material immobility would not save him from the hands of Nature; he would not be liberated from her workings. For it is not our physical movements and activities alone which are meant by works, by *karma;* our mental existence also is a great complex action, it is even the greater and more important part of the works of the unresting energy,—subjective cause and determinant of the physical. We have gained nothing if we repress the effect but retain the activity of the subjective cause. The objects of sense are only an occasion for our bondage, the mind's insistence on them is the means, the instrumental cause. A man may control his organs of action and refuse to give them their natural play, but he has gained nothing if his mind continues to remember and dwell upon the objects of sense. Such a man has bewildered himself with false notions of self-discipline: he has not understood its object or its truth, nor the first principles of his subjective existence; therefore all his methods of self-discipline are false and null.*

*I cannot think that *mithyâchâra* means a hypocrite. How is a man a hypocrite who inflicts on himself so severe and complete a privation? He is mistaken and deluded,

The body's actions, even the mind's actions are nothing in themselves, neither a bondage, nor the first cause of bondage. What is vital is the mighty energy of Nature which will have her way and her play in her great field of mind and life and body; what is dangerous in her, is the power of her three *gunas,* modes or qualities to confuse and bewilder the intelligence and so obscure the soul. That, as we shall see later, is the whole crux of action and liberation for the Gita. Be free from obscuration and bewilderment by the three *gunas* and action can continue, as it must continue, and even the largest, richest or most enormous and violent action; it does not matter, for nothing then touches the Purusha, the soul has *naishkarmya.*

But at present the Gita does not proceed to that larger point. Since the mind is the instrumental cause, since inaction is impossible, what is rational, necessary, the right way is a controlled action of the subjective and objective organism. The mind must bring the senses under its control as an instrument of the intelligent will and then the organs of action must be used for their proper office, for action, but for action done as Yoga. But what is the essence of this self-control, what is meant by action done as Yoga, *Karmayoga?* It is non-attachment, it is to do works without clinging with the mind to the objects of sense and the fruit of the works. Not

vimûdhâtmâ, and his *âchâra,* his formally regulated method of self-discipline, is a false and vain method,—this surely is all that the Gita means.

complete inaction, which is an error, a confusion, a self-delusion, an impossibility, but action full and free done without subjection to sense and passion, desireless and unattached works, are the first secret of perfection. Do action thus self-controlled, says Krishna, *niyatam kuru karma twam:* I have said that knowledge, the intelligence, is greater than works, *jyâyasî karmano buddhih,* but I did not mean that inaction is greater than action ; the contrary is the truth, *karma jyâyo akarmanah.* For knowledge does not mean renunciation of works, it means equality and non-attachment to desire and the objects of sense ; and it means the poise of the intelligent will in the Soul free and high-uplifted above the lower instrumentation of Prakriti* and controlling the works of the mind and the senses and body in the power of self-knowledge and the pure objectless self-delight of spiritual realisation, *niyatam karma. Buddhiyoga* is fulfilled by *karma-yoga ;* the Yoga of the self-liberating intelligent

* Again, I cannot accept the current interpretation of *niyatam karma* as if it meant fixed and formal works and were equivalent to the Vedic *nityakarma,* the regular works of sacrifice, ceremonial and the daily rule of Vedic living. Surely, *niyata* simply takes up the *niyamya* of the last verse. Krishna makes a statement, "he who controlling the senses by the mind engages with the organs of action in Yoga of action, he excels," *manasâ niyamya ârabhate karmayogam,* and he immediately goes on to draw from the statement an injunction, to sum it up and convert it into a rule. "Do thou do controlled action," *niyatam kuru karma twam: niyatam* takes up the *niyamya, kuru karma* takes up the *ârabhate karmayogam.* Not formal works fixed by an external rule, but desireless works controlled by the liberated *buddhi,* is the Gita's teaching.

will finds its full meaning by the Yoga of desireless works. Thus the Gita founds its teaching of the necessity of desireless works, *nishkâma karma,* and unites the subjective practice of the Sankhyas—rejecting their merely physical rule—with the practice of Yoga.

But still there is an essential difficulty unsolved. Desire is the ordinary motive of all human actions, and if the soul is free from desire, then there is no farther rationale for action. We may be compelled to do certain works for the maintenance of the body, but even that is a subjection to the desire of the body which we ought to get rid of if we are to attain perfection. But granting that this cannot be done, the only way is to fix a rule for action outside ourselves, not dictated by anything in our subjectivity, the *nityakarma* of the Vedic rule, the routine of ceremonial sacrifice, daily conduct and social duty, which the man who seeks liberation may do simply because it is enjoined upon him, without any personal purpose or subjective interest in them, with an absolute indifference to the doing, not because he is compelled by his nature but because it is enjoined by the Shastra. But if the principle of the action is not to be external to the nature but subjective, if the actions even of the liberated and the sage are to be controlled and determined by his nature, *swabhâva-niyatam,* then the only subjective principle of action is desire of whatever kind, lust of the flesh or emotion of the heart or base or noble aim of the mind, but all

subject to the *gunas* of Prakriti. Let us then interpret the *niyata karma* of the Gita as the *nitya-karma* of the Vedic rule, its *kartavya karma* or work that has to be done as the Aryan rule of social duty and let us take too its work done as a sacrifice to mean simply these Vedic sacrifices and this fixed social duty performed disinterestedly and without any personal object. This is how the Gita's doctrine of desireless work is often interpreted. But it seems to me that the Gita's teaching is not so crude and simple, not so local and temporal and narrow as all that. It is large, free, subtle and profound; it is for all time and for all men, not for a particular age and country. Especially, it is always breaking free from external forms, details, dogmatic notions and going back to principles and the great facts of our nature and our being. It is a work of large philosophic truth and spiritual practicality, not of constrained religious and philosophical formulas and stereotyped dogmas.

The difficulty is this, how, our nature being what it is and desire the common principle of its action, is it possible to institute a really desireless action? For what we call ordinarily disinterested action is not really desireless; it is simply a replacement of certain smaller personal interests by other larger desires which have only the appearance of being impersonal, virtue, country, mankind. All action, moreover, as Krishna insists, is done by the *gunas* of Prakriti, by our nature; in acting according to the Shastra we are still acting according to

our nature,—even if this Shastric action is not, as it usually is, a mere cover for our desires, prejudices, passions, egoisms, our personal, national, sectarian vanities, sentiments and preferences; but even otherwise, even at the purest, still we obey a choice of our nature, and if our nature were different and the *gunas* acted on our intelligence and will in some other combination, we would not accept the Shastra, but live according to our pleasure or our intellectual notions or else break free from the social law to live the life of the solitary or the ascetic. We cannot become impersonal by obeying something outside ourselves, for we cannot so get outside ourselves; we can only do it by rising to the highest in ourselves, into our free Soul and Self which is the same and one in all and has therefore no personal interests, to the Divine in our being who possesses Himself transcendent of cosmos and is therefore not bound by His cosmic works or His individual action. That is what the Gita teaches and desirelessness is only a means to this end, not an aim in itself. Yes, but how is it to be brought about? By doing all works with sacrifice as the only object, is the reply of the divine Teacher. "By doing works otherwise than for sacrifice, this world of men is in bondage to works; for sacrifice practise works, O son of Kunti, becoming free from all attachment." It is evident that all works and not merely sacrifice and social duties can be done in this spirit; any action may be done either from the ego-sense narrow or enlarged or for the sake of the Divine. All being and all

action of Prakriti exist only for the sake of the Divine ; from that it proceeds, by that it endures, to that it is directed. But so long as we are dominated by the ego-sense we cannot perceive or act in the spirit of this truth, but act for the satisfaction of the ego and in the spirit of the ego, otherwise than for sacrifice. Egoism is the knot of the bondage. By acting Godwards, without any thought of ego, we loosen this knot and finally arrive at freedom.

At first, however, the Gita takes up the Vedic statement of the idea of sacrifice and phrases the law of sacrifice in its current terms. This it does with a definite object. We have seen that the quarrel between renunciation and works has two forms, the opposition of Sankhya and Yoga which is already in principle reconciled and the opposition of Vedism and Vedantism which the Teacher has yet to reconcile.. The first is a larger statement of the opposition in which the idea of works is general and wide. The Sankhya starts from the notion of the divine status as that of the immutable and inactive Purusha which each soul is in reality and makes an opposition between inactivity of Purusha and activity of Prakriti ; so its logical culmination is cessation of all works. Yoga starts from the notion of the Divine as Ishwara, lord of the operations of Prakriti and therefore superior to them, and its logical culmination is not cessation of works but the soul's superiority to them and freedom even though doing all works. In the

opposition of Vedism and Vedantism works, *karma,* are restricted to Vedic works and sometimes even to Vedic sacrifice and ritualised works, all else being excluded as not useful to salvation. Vedism of the Mimansakas insisted on them as the means, Vedantism taking its stand on the Upanishads looked on them as only a preliminary belonging to the state of ignorance and in the end to be overpassed and rejected, an obstacle to the seeker of liberation. Vedism worshipped the Devas, the gods, with sacrifice and held them to be the powers who assist our salvation. Vedantism was inclined to regard them as powers of the mental and material world opposed to our salvation (men, says the Upanishad, are the cattle of the gods, who do not desire man to know and be free); it saw the Divine as the immutable Brahman who has to be attained not by works of sacrifice and worship but by knowledge. Works only lead to material results and to an inferior Paradise; therefore they have to be renounced.

The Gita resolves this opposition by insisting that the Devas are only forms of the one Deva, the Ishwara, the Lord of all Yoga and worship and sacrifice and austerity, and if it is true that sacrifice offered to the Devas leads only to material results and to Paradise, it is also true that sacrifice offered to the Ishwara leads beyond them to the great liberation. For the Lord and the immutable Brahman are not two different beings, but one and the same Being, and whoever strives towards either, is striving

towards that one divine Existence. All works in their totality find their culmination and completeness in the knowledge of the Divine, *sarvam karmâkhilam pârtha jnâne parisamâpyate.* They are not an obstacle, but the way to the supreme knowledge. Thus this opposition too is reconciled with the help of a large elucidation of the meaning of sacrifice. In fact its conflict is only a restricted form of the larger opposition between Yoga and Sankhya. Vedism is a specialised and narrow form of Yoga; the principle of the Vedantists is identical with that of the Sankhyas, for to both the movement of salvation is the recoil of the intelligence, the *buddhi,* from the differentiating powers of Nature, from ego, mind, senses, from the subjective and the objective, and its return to the undifferentiated and the immutable. It is with this object of reconciliation in his mind that the Teacher first approaches his statement of the doctrine of sacrifice; but throughout, even from the very beginning, he keeps his eye not on the restricted Vedic sense of sacrifice and works, but on their larger and universal application,—that widening of narrow and formal notions to admit the great general truths they unduly restrict which is always the method of the Gita.

XII

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SACRIFICE

THE Gita's theory of sacrifice is stated in two separate passages; one we find in the third chapter, another in the fourth; the first gives it in language which might, taken by itself, seem to be speaking only of the ceremonial sacrifice; the second interpreting that into the sense of a large philosophical symbolism, transforms at once its whole significance and raises it to a plane of high psychological and spiritual truth. "With sacrifice the Lord of creatures of old created creatures and said, By this shall you bring forth (fruits or offspring), let this be your milker of desires. Foster by this the gods and let the gods foster you; fostering each other, you shall attain to the supreme good. Fostered by sacrifice the gods shall give you desired enjoyments; who enjoys their given enjoyments and has not given to them, he is a thief. The good who eat what is left from the sacrifice, are released from all sin; but evil are they and enjoy sin who cook (the food) for their own sake. From food creatures come into being, from rain is the birth of food, from sacrifice comes into being the rain, sacrifice is born of work; work know to be born of Brahman, Brahman is born of the Immutable; therefore is the all-pervading

Brahman established in the sacrifice. He who follows not here the wheel thus set in movement, evil is his being, sensual is his delight, in vain, O Partha, that man lives." Having thus stated the necessity of sacrifice,—we shall see hereafter in what sense we may understand a passage which seems at first sight to convey only a traditional theory of ritualism and the necessity of the ceremonial offering,—Krishna proceeds to state the superiority of the spiritual man to works. "But the man whose delight is in the Self and who is satisfied with the enjoyment of the Self and in the Self he is content, for him there exists no work that needs to be done. He has no object here to be gained by action done and none to be gained by action undone; he has no dependence on all these existences for any object to be gained."

Here then are the two ideals, Vedist and Vedantist, standing as if in all their sharp original separation and opposition, on one side the active ideal of acquiring enjoyments here and the highest good beyond by sacrifice and the mutual dependence of the human being and the divine powers and on the other, facing it, the austerer ideal of the liberated man who, independent in the Spirit, has nothing to do with enjoyment or works or the human or the divine worlds, but exists only in the peace of the supreme Self, joys only in the calm joy of the Brahman. The next verses create a ground for the reconciliation between the two extremes; the secret is not inaction as soon as one turns towards the

higher truth, but desireless action both before and after it is reached. The liberated man has nothing to gain by action, but nothing also to gain by inaction, and it is not at all for any personal object that he has to make his choice. "Therefore without attachment perform ever the work that is to be done (done for the sake of the world, *lokasangraha,* as is made clear immediately afterward); for by doing work without attachment man attains to the highest. For it was even by works that Janaka and the rest attained to perfection." It is true that works and sacrifice are a means of arriving at the highest good, *sreyah param avâpsyatha;* but there are three kinds of works, that done without sacrifice for personal enjoyment which is entirely selfish and egoistic and misses the true law and aim and utility of life, *mogham pârtha sa jîvati,* that done with desire, but with sacrifice and the enjoyment only as a result of sacrifice and therefore to that extent consecrated and sanctified, and that done without desire or attachment of any kind. It is the last which brings the soul of man to the highest, *param âpnoti purushah.*

The whole sense and drift of this teaching turns upon the interpretation we are to give to the important words, *yajna, karma, brahma,* sacrifice, work, Brahman. If the sacrifice is simply the Vedic sacrifice, if the work from which it is born is the Vedic rule of works and if the *brahman* from which the work itself is born is the *shabdabrahman* in the sense only of the letter of the Veda, then all the positions of the Vedist dogma are conceded and

there is nothing more. Ceremonial sacrifice is the right means of gaining children, wealth, enjoyment; by ceremonial sacrifice rain is brought down from heaven and the prosperity and continuity of the race assured; life is a continual transaction between the gods and men in which man offers ceremonial gifts to the gods from the gifts they have bestowed on him and in return is enriched, protected, fostered. Therefore all human works have to be accompanied and turned into a sacrament by ceremonial sacrifice and ritualistic worship; work not so dedicated is accursed, enjoyment without previous ceremonial sacrifice and ritual consecration is a sin. Even salvation, even the highest good is to be gained by ceremonial sacrifice. It must never be abandoned. Even the seeker of liberation has to continue to do ceremonial sacrifice, although without attachment; it is by ceremonial sacrifice and ritualistic works done without attachment that men of the type of Janaka attained to spiritual perfection and liberation.

Obviously, this cannot be the meaning of the Gita, for it would be in contradiction with all the rest of the book. Even in the passage itself, without the illumining interpretation afterwards given to it in the fourth chapter, we have already an indication of a wider sense where it is said that sacrifice is born from work, work from *brahman, brahman* from the Akshara, and therefore the all-pervading Brahman, *sarvagatam brahma,* is established in the sacrifice. The connecting logic of the "therefore" and the repetition of the word *brahma* are significant;

for it shows clearly that the *brahman* from which all work is born has to be understood with an eye not so much to the current Vedic teaching in which it means the Veda as to a symbolical sense in which the creative Word is identical with the all-pervading Brahman, the Eternal, the one Self present in all existences, *sarvabhûteshu,* and present in all the workings of existence. The Veda is the knowledge of the Divine, the Eternal,—"I am He who is to be known in all the books of the Knowledge," *vedeshu vedyah.* Krishna will say in a subsequent chapter; but it is the knowledge of him in the workings of Prakriti, in the workings of the three *gunas,* first qualities or modes of Nature, *traigunyavishayâ vedah.* This Brahman or Divine in the workings of Nature is born, as we may say, out of the Akshara, the immutable Purusha, the Self who stands above all the modes or qualities or workings of Nature, *nistraigunya.* The Brahman is one but self-displayed in two aspects, the immutable Being and the creator and originator of works in the mutable becoming, *Atman, sarvabhûtâni;* it is the immobile omnipresent Soul of things and it is the spiritual principle of the mobile working of things, Purusha poised in himself and Purusha active in Prakriti; it is *akshara* and *kshara.* In both of these aspects the Divine Being, Purushottama, manifests himself in the universe; the immutable above all qualities is His poise of peace, self-possession, equality, *samam Brahma;* from that proceeds His manifestation in the qualities of Prakriti and their

universal workings; from the Purusha in Prakriti, from this Brahman with qualities, proceed all the works of* the universal energy, Karma, in man and in all existences; from that work proceeds the principle of sacrifice. Even the material interchange between gods and men proceeds upon this principle, as typefied in the dependence of rain and its product food on this working and on them the physical birth of creatures. For all the working of Prakriti is in its true nature a sacrifice, *yajna,* with the Divine Being as the enjoyer of all energisms and works and sacrifice and the great Lord of all existences, *bhoktâram yajnatapasâm sarvabhûta-maheswaram,* and to know this Divine all-pervading and established in sacrifice, *sarvagatam yajne pratisthitam,* is the true, the Vedic knowledge.

But he may be known in an inferior action through the *devas,* the gods, the powers of the divine Soul in Nature and in the eternal interaction of

* That this is the right interpretation results also from the opening of the eighth chapter where the universal principles are enumerated, *Akshara (brahma), swabhâva, karma, kshara bhâva, purusha, adhiyajna.* Akshara is the immutable Brahman, spirit or self, Atman; swabhava is the principle of the self, *adhyâtma,* operative as the original nature of the being, "own way of becoming", and this proceeds out of the self, the Akshara; Karma proceeds from that and is the creative movement, *visarga,* which brings all natural beings and all changing subjective and objective shapes of being into existence; the result of Karma therefore is all this mutable becoming, the changes of nature developed out of the original self-nature, *kshara bhâva* out of *swabhâva;* purusha is the soul, the divine element in the becoming, *adhidaivata,* by whose presence the workings of Karma become a sacrifice, *yajna,* to the Divine within; *adhiyajna* is this secret Divine who receives the sacrifice.

these powers and the soul of man, mutually giving and receiving, mutually helping, increasing, raising each others' workings and satisfaction, a commerce in which man rises towards a growing fitness for the supreme good. He recognises that his life is a part of this divine action in Nature and not a thing separate and to be held and pursued for its own sake. He regards his enjoyments and the satisfaction of his desires as the fruit of sacrifice and the gift of the gods in their divine universal workings and he ceases to pursue them in the false and evil spirit of sinful egoistic selfishness as if they were a good to be seized from life by his own unaided strength without return and without thankfulness. As this spirit increases in him, he subordinates his desires, becomes satisfied with sacrifice as the law of life and works and is content with whatever remains over from the sacrifice, giving up all the rest freely as an offering in the great and beneficent interchange between his life and the world-life. Whoever goes contrary to this law of action and pursues works and enjoyment for his own isolated personal self-interest, lives in vain; he misses the true meaning and aim and utility of living and the upward growth of the soul; he is not on the path which leads to the highest good. But the highest only comes when the sacrifice is no longer to the gods, but to the one all-pervading Divine established in the sacrifice, of whom the gods are inferior forms and powers, and when he puts away the lower self that desires and enjoys and gives up his personal sense of being

the worker to the true executrix of all works, Prakriti, and his personal sense of being the enjoyer to the Divine Purusha, the higher and universal Self who is the real enjoyer of the works of Prakriti. In that Self and not in any personal enjoyment he finds now his sole satisfaction, complete content, pure delight; he has nothing to gain by action or inaction, depends neither on gods nor men for anything, seeks no profit from any, for the self-delight is all-sufficient to him, but does works for the sake of the Divine only, as a pure sacrifice, without attachment or desire. Thus he gains equality and becomes free from the modes of Nature, *nistraigunya;* his soul takes its poise not in the insecurity of Prakriti, but in the peace of the immutable Brahman, even while his actions continue in the movement of Prakriti. Thus is sacrifice his way of attaining to the Highest.

That this is the sense of the passage is made clear in what follows, by the affirmation of *loka-sangraha* as the object of works, of Prakriti as the sole doer of works and the divine Purusha as their equal upholder, to whom works have to be given up even in their doing,—this inner giving up of works and yet physical doing of them is the culmination of sacrifice,—and by the affirmation that the result of such active sacrifice with an equal and desireless mind is liberation from the bondage of works. "He who is satisfied with whatever gain comes to him and equal in failure and success, is not bound even when he acts. When a man liberated, free from

attachment, acts for sacrifice, all his action is dissolved," leaves, that is to say, no result of bondage or after-impression on his free, pure, perfect and equal soul. To these passages we shall have to return. They are followed by a perfectly explicit and detailed interpretation of the meaning of *yajna* in the language of the Gita which leaves no doubt at all about the symbolic use of the words and the psychological character of the sacrifice enjoined by this teaching. In the ancient Vedic system there was always a double sense physical and psychological, outward and symbolic, the exterior form of the sacrifice and the inner meaning of all its circumstances. But the secret symbolism of the ancient Vedic mystics, exact, curious, poetic, psychological, had been long forgotten by this time and it is now replaced by another, large, general and philosophical in the spirit of Vedanta and a later Yoga. The fire of sacrifice, *agni*, is no material flame, but *brahmâgni*, the fire of the Brahman, or it is the Brahman-ward energy, inner Agni, priest of the sacrifice, into which the offering is poured; the fire is self-control or it is a purified sense-action or it is the vital energy in that discipline of the control of the vital being through the control of the breath which is common to Rajayoga and Hathayoga, or it is the fire of self-knowledge, the flame of the supreme sacrifice. The food eaten as the leavings of the sacrifice is, it is explained, the nectar of immortality, *amrita*, left over from the offering; and here we have still something of the old Vedic

symbolism in which the Soma-wine was the physical symbol of the *amrita,* the immortalising delight of the divine ecstasy won by the sacrifice, offered to the gods and drunk by men. The offering itself is whatever working of his energy, physical or psychological, is consecrated by him in action of body or action of mind to the gods or God, to the Self or to the universal powers, to one's own higher Self or to the Self in mankind and in all existences.

This elaborate explanation of the Yajna sets out with a vast and comprehensive definition in which it is declared that the act and energy and materials of the sacrifice, the giver and receiver of the sacrifice, the goal and object of the sacrifice are all the one Brahman. "Brahman is the giving, Brahman is the food-offering, by Brahman it is offered into the Brahman-fire, Brahman is that which is to be attained by samadhi in Brahman-action." This then is the knowledge in which the liberated man has to do works of sacrifice. It is the knowledge declared of old in the great Vedantic utterances, "I am He," "All this verily is the Brahman, Brahman is this Self." It is the knowledge of the entire unity; it is the One manifest as the doer and the deed and the object of works, knower and knowledge and the object of knowledge. The universal energy into which the action is poured is the Divine; the consecrated energy of the giving is the Divine; whatever is offered is only some form of the Divine; the giver of the offering is the Divine himself in man; the action, the work,

the sacrifice is itself the Divine in movement, in activity; the goal to be reached by sacrifice is the Divine. For the man who has this knowledge and lives and acts in it, there can be no binding works, no personal and egoistically appropriated action; there is only the divine Purusha acting by the divine Prakriti in His own being, offering everything into the fire of His self-conscious cosmic energy, while the knowledge and the possession of His divine existence and consciousness by the soul unified with Him is the goal of all this God-directed movement and activity. To know that and to live and act in this unifying consciousness is to be free.

But all even of the Yogins have not attained to this knowledge. "Some Yogins follow after the sacrifice which is of the gods; others offer the sacrifice by the sacrifice itself into the Brahman-fire." The former conceive of the Divine in various forms and powers and seek him by various means, ordinances, *dharmas,* laws or, as we might say, settled rites of action, self-discipline, consecrated works; for the latter, those who already know, the simple fact of sacrifice, of offering whatever work to the Divine itself, of casting all their activities into the unified divine consciousness and energy, is their one means, their one *dharma.* The means of sacrifice are various; the offerings are of many kinds. There is the psychological sacrifice of self-control and self-discipline which leads to the higher self-possession and self-knowledge. "Some offer their senses into the fires of control, others offer the

objects of sense into the fires of sense, and others offer all the actions of the sense and all the actions of the vital force into the fire of the Yoga of self-control kindled by knowledge." There is, that is to say, the discipline which receives the objects of sense-perception without allowing the mind to be disturbed or affected by its sense-activities, the senses themselves becoming pure fires of sacrifice ; there is the discipline which stills the senses so that the soul in its purity may appear from behind the veil of mind-action, calm and still ; there is the discipline by which, when the self is known, all the actions of the sense-perceptions and all the action of the vital being are received into that one still and tranquil soul. The offering of the striver after perfection may be material and physical, *dravya-yajna,* like that consecrated in worship by the devotee to his deity, or it may be the austerity of his self-discipline and energy of his soul directed to some high aim, *tapo-yajna,* or it may be some form of Yoga like the Pranayama of the Rajayogins and Hathayogins, or any other *yoga-yajna.* All these tend to the purification of the being ; all sacrifice is a way towards the attainment of the highest.

The one thing needful, the saving principle constant in all these variations, is to subordinate the lower activities, to diminish the control of desire and replace it by a superior energy, to abandon the purely egoistic enjoyment for that diviner delight

which comes by sacrifice, by self-dedication, by self-mastery, by the giving up of one's lower impulses to a greater and higher aim. "They who enjoy the nectar of immortality left over from the sacrifice attain to the eternal Brahman." Sacrifice is the law of the world and nothing can be gained without it, neither mastery here, nor the possession of heavens beyond, nor the supreme possession of all; "this world is not for him who doeth not sacrifice, how then any other world?" Therefore all these and many other forms of sacrifice have been "extended in the mouth of the Brahman," the mouth of that Fire which receives all offerings; they are all means and forms of the one great Existence in activity, means by which the action of the human being can be offered up to That of which his outward Existence is a part and with which his inmost self is one. They are "all born of work"; all proceed from and are ordained by the one vast energy of the Divine which manifests itself in the universal *karma* and makes all the cosmic activity a progressive offering to the one Self and Lord and of which the last stage for the human being is self-knowledge and the possession of the divine or Brahmic consciousness. "So knowing thou shalt become free."

But there are gradations in the range of these various forms of sacrifice, the physical offering the lowest, the sacrifice of knowledge the highest. Knowledge is that in which all this action

culminates, not any lower knowledge, but the highest, self-knowledge and God-knowledge, that which we can learn from those who know the true principles of existence, that by possessing which we shall not fall again into the bewilderment of the mind's ignorance and into its bondage to mere sense-knowledge and to the inferior activity of the desires and passions. The knowledge in which all culminates is that by which "thou shalt see all existences (becomings, *bhûtâni*) without exception in the Self, then in Me." For the Self is that one, immutable, all-pervading, all-containing, self-existent reality or Brahman hidden behind our mental being into which our consciousness widens out when it is liberated from the ego; we come to see all beings as becomings, *bhûtâni*, within that one self-existence.

But this Self or immutable Brahman we see too to be the self-presentation to our essential psychological consciousness of a supreme Being who is the source of our existence and of whom all that is mutable or immutable is the manifestation. He is God, the Divine, the Purushottama. To Him we offer everything as a sacrifice; into His hands we give up our actions; in His existence we live and move; unified with Him in our nature and with all existence in Him, we become one soul and one power of being with Him and with all beings; with His supreme reality we identify and unite our self-being. By works done for sacrifice, eliminating desire, we arrive at knowledge and at the soul's

possession of itself; by works done in self-knowledge and God-knowledge we are liberated into the unity, peace and joy of the divine existence.

XIII

THE LORD OF THE SACRIFICE

We have, before we can proceed further, to gather up all that has been said in its main principles. The whole of the Gita's gospel of works rests upon its idea of sacrifice and contains in fact the eternal connecting truth of God and the world and works. The human mind seizes ordinarily only fragmentary notions and standpoints of a manysided eternal truth of existence and builds upon them its various theories of life and ethics and religion, stressing this or that sign or appearance, but to some entirety of it it must always tend to reawaken whenever it returns in an age of large enlightenment to any entire and synthetic relation of its world-knowledge with its God-knowledge and self-knowledge. The gospel of the Gita reposes upon this fundamental Vedantic truth that all being is the one Brahman and all existence the wheel of Brahman, a divine movement opening out from God and returning to God. All is the expressive activity of Nature and Nature a power of the Divine which works out the consciousness and will of the divine Soul master of her works and inhabitant of her forms. It is for his satisfaction that she descends into the absorption of the forms of things and the works of life and

mind and returns again through mind and self-knowledge to the conscious possession of the Soul that dwells within her. There is first an involving of self and all it is or means in an evolution of phenomena; there is afterwards an evolution of self, a revelation of all it is and means, all that is hidden and yet suggested by the phenomenal creation. This cycle of Nature could not be what it is but for the Purusha assuming and maintaining simultaneously three eternal poises each of which is necessary to the totality of this action. It must manifest itself in the mutable, and there we see it as the finite, the many, all existences, *sarva-bhûtâni*. It appears to us as the finite personality of these million creatures with their infinite diversities and various relations and it appears to us behind these as the soul and force of the action of the gods,—that is to say, the cosmic powers and qualities of the Divine which preside over the workings of the life of the universe and constitute to our perception different universal forms of the one Existence, or, it may be, various self-statements of personality of the one supreme Person. Then, secret behind and within all forms and existences, we perceive too an immutable, an infinite, a timeless, an impersonal, a one unchanging spirit of existence, an indivisible Self of all that is, in which all these many find themselves to be really one. And therefore by returning to that the active, finite personality of the individual being discovers that it can release itself into a silent largeness of

universality and the peace and poise of an immutable and unattached unity with all that proceeds from and is supported by this indivisible Infinite. Or even he may escape into it from individual existence. But the highest secret of all, *uttamam rahasyam,* is the Purushottama. This is the supreme Divine, God, who possesses both the infinite and the finite and in whom the personal and the impersonal, the one Self and the many existences, being and becoming, the world-action and the supracosmic peace, *pravritti* and *nivritti*, meet, are united, are possessed together and in each other. In God all things find their secret truth and their absolute reconciliation.

All truth of works must depend upon the truth of being. All active existence must be in its inmost reality a sacrifice of works offered by Prakriti to Purusha, Nature offering to the supreme and infinite Soul the desire of the multiple finite Soul within her. Life is an altar to which she brings her workings and the fruits of her workings and lays them before whatever aspect of the Divinity the consciousness in her has reached for whatever result of the sacrifice the desire of the living soul can seize on as its immediate or its highest good. According to the grade of consciousness and being which the soul has reached in Nature, will be the Divinity it worships, the delight which it seeks and the hope for which it sacrifices. And in the movement of the mutable Purusha in Nature all is and must be interchange ; for existence is one and its

divisions must found themselves on some law of mutual dependence, each growing by each and living by all. Where sacrifice is not willingly given, Nature exacts it by force, she satisfies the law of her living. A mutual giving and receiving is the law of Life without which it cannot for one moment endure, and this fact is the stamp of the divine creative Will on the world it has manifested in its being, the proof that with sacrifice as their eternal companion the Lord of creatures has created all these existences. The universal law of sacrifice is the sign that the world is of God and belongs to God and that life is his dominion and house of worship and not a field for the self-satisfaction of the independent ego; not the fulfilment of the ego,—that is only our crude and obscure beginning, but the discovery of God, the worship and seeking of the Divine and the Infinite through a constantly enlarging sacrifice culminating in a perfect self-giving founded on a perfect self-knowledge is that to which the experience of life is at last intended to lead.

But the individual being begins with ignorance and persists long in ignorance. Acutely conscious of himself he sees the ego as the cause and whole meaning of life and not the Divine. He sees himself as the doer of works and does not see that all the workings of existence including his own internal and external activities are the workings of one universal Nature and nothing else. He sees himself as the enjoyer of works and imagines that

for him all exists and him Nature ought to satisfy and obey his personal will; he does not see that she is not at all concerned with satisfying him or at all careful of his will, but obeys a higher universal will and seeks to satisfy a Godhead who transcends her and her works and creations; his finite being, his will and his satisfactions are hers and not his, and she offers them at every moment as a sacrifice to the Divine of whose purpose in her she makes all this the covert instrumentation. Because of this ignorance whose seal is egoism, the creature ignores the law of sacrifice and seeks to take all he can for himself and gives only what Nature by her internal and external compulsion forces him to give. He can really take nothing except what she allows him to receive as his portion, what the divine Powers within her yield to his desire. The egoistic soul in a world of sacrifice is as if a thief or robber who takes what these Powers bring to him and has no mind to give in return. He misses the true meaning of life and, since he does not use life and works for the enlargement and elevation of his being through sacrifice, he lives in vain.

Only when the individual being begins to perceive and acknowledge in his acts the value of the self in others as well as the power and needs of his own ego, begins to perceive universal Nature behind his own workings and through the cosmic godheads gets some glimpse of the One and the Infinite, is he on his way to the transcendence of his limitation by the ego and the discovery of his

soul. He begins to discover a law other than that of his desires, to which his desires must be more and more subordinated and subjected; he develops the purely egoistic into the understanding and ethical being. He begins to give more value to the claims of the self in others and less to the claims of his ego; he admits the strife between egoism and altruism and by the increase of his altruistic tendencies he prepares the enlargement of his own consciousness and being. He begins to perceive Nature and divine Powers in Nature to whom he owes sacrifice, adoration, obedience, because it is by them and by their law that the workings both of the mental and the material world are controlled, and he learns that only by increasing their presence and their greatness in his thought and will and life can he himself increase his powers, knowledge, right action and the satisfactions which these things bring to him. Thus he adds the religious and supraphysical to the material and egoistic sense of life and prepares himself to rise through the finite to the Infinite.

But this is only a long intermediate stage. It is still subject to the law of desire, to the centrality of all things in the conceptions and needs of his ego and to the control of his being as well as his works by Nature, though it is a regulated and governed desire, a clarified ego and a Nature more and more subtilised and enlightened by the sattwic, the highest natural principle. All this is still within the domain, though the very much enlarged

domain, of the mutable, finite and personal. The real self-knowledge and consequently the right way of works lies beyond; for the sacrifice done with knowledge is the highest sacrifice and that alone brings a perfect working. That can only come when he perceives that the self in him and the self in others are one being and this self is something higher than the ego, an infinite, an impersonal, a universal existence in whom all move and have their being,—when he perceives that all the cosmic gods to whom he offers his sacrifice are forms of one infinite Godhead and when again, leaving all his limited and limiting conceptions of that one Godhead, he perceives him to be the supreme and ineffable Deity who is at once the finite and the infinite, the one self and the many, beyond Nature though manifesting himself through Nature, beyond limitation by qualities though formulating the power of his being through infinite quality. This is the Purushottama to whom the sacrifice has to be offered, not for any transient personal fruit of works, but for the soul's possession of God and in order to live in harmony and union with the Divine.

In other words, man's way to liberation and perfection lies through an increasing impersonality. It is his ancient and constant experience that the more he opens himself to the impersonal and infinite, to that which is pure and high and one and common in all things and beings, the impersonal and infinite in Nature, the impersonal and infinite in life, the impersonal and infinite in

his own subjectivity, the less he is bound by his ego and by the circle of the finite, the more he feels a sense of largeness, peace, pure happiness. The pleasure, joy, satisfaction which the finite by itself can give or the ego in its own right attain, is transitory, petty and insecure. To dwell entirely in the ego-sense and its finite conceptions, powers, satisfactions is to find this world for ever full of transience and suffering, *anityam asukham;* the finite life is always troubled by a certain sense of vanity for this fundamental reason that the finite is not the whole or the highest truth of life; life is not entirely real until it opens into the sense of the infinite. It is for this reason that the Gita opens its gospel of works by insisting on the Brahmic consciousness, the impersonal life, that great object of the discipline of the ancient sages. For the impersonal, the infinite, the One in which all the permanent, mutable, multiple activity of the world finds above itself its base of permanence, security and peace, is the immobile Self, the Akṣhara, the Brahman. If we see this, we shall see that to raise one's consciousness and the poise of one's being out of limited personality into this infinite and impersonal Brahman is the first spiritual necessity. To see all beings in this one Self is the knowledge which raises the soul out of egoistic ignorance and its works and results; to live in it is to acquire peace and firm spiritual foundation.

The way to bring about this great transformation follows a double path; for there is the way

of knowledge and there is the way of works, and the Gita combines them in a firm synthesis. The way of knowledge is to turn the understanding, the intelligent will away from its downward absorption in the workings of the mind and the senses and upward to the self, the Purusha or Brahman ; it is to make it dwell always on the one idea of the one Self and not in the many-branching conceptions of the mind and many-streaming impulses of desire. Taken by itself this path would seem to lead to the complete renunciation of works, to an immobile passivity and to the severance of the soul from Nature. But in reality such an absolute renunciation, passivity and severance are impossible. Purusha and Prakriti are twin principles of being which cannot be severed, and so long as we remain in Nature, our workings in Nature must continue, even though they may take a different form or rather a different sense from those of the unenlightened soul. The real renunciation—for renunciation, *sannyâsa,* there must be—is not the fleeing from works, but the slaying of ego and desire. The way is to abandon attachment to the fruit of works even while doing them, and the way is to recognise Nature as the agent and leave her to do her works and to live in the soul as the witness and sustainer, watching and sustaining her, but not attached either to her actions or their fruits. The ego, the limited and troubled personality is then quieted and merged in the consciousness of the one impersonal Self,

while the works of Nature continue to our vision to operate through all these "becomings" or existences who are now seen by us as living and acting and moving, under her impulsion entirely, in this one infinite Being; our own finite existence is seen and felt to be only one of these and its workings are seen and felt to be those of Nature, not of our real self which is the silent, impersonal unity. The ego claimed them as its own doings and therefore we thought them ours; but the ego is now dead and henceforth they are no longer ours, but Nature's. We have achieved by the slaying of ego impersonality in our being and consciousness; we have achieved by the renunciation of desire impersonality in the works of our nature. We are free not only in inaction, but in action; our liberty does not depend on a physical and temperamental immobility and vacancy, nor do we fall from freedom directly we act. Even in a full current of natural action the impersonal soul in us remains calm, still and free.

The liberation given by this perfect impersonality is real, is complete, is indispensable; but is it the last word, the end of the whole matter? All life, all world-existence, we have said, is the sacrifice offered by Nature to the Purusha, the one and secret soul in Nature, in whom all her workings take place; but its real sense is obscured in us by ego, by desire, by our limited, active, multiple personality. We have risen out of ego and desire and limited personality and by impersonality, its

great corrective, we have found the impersonal Godhead; we have identified our being with the one self and soul in whom all exist. The sacrifice of works continues, conducted not by ourselves any longer, but by Nature,—Nature operating through the finite part of our being, mind, senses, body—but in our infinite being. But to whom then is this sacrifice offered and with what object? For the impersonal has no activity and no desires, no object to be gained, no dependence for anything on all this world of creatures; it exists for itself, in its own self-delight, in its own immutable, eternal being. We may have to do works without desire as a means in order to reach this impersonal self-existence and self-delight, but, that movement once executed, the object of works is finished; the sacrifice is no longer needed. Works may even then continue because Nature continues and her activities; but there is no longer any further object in these works. The sole reason for our continuing to act after liberation is purely negative; it is the compulsion of Nature on our finite parts of mind and body. But if that be all, then, first, works may well be whittled down and reduced to a minimum, may be confined to what Nature's compulsion absolutely will have from our bodies; and secondly, even if there is no reduction to a minimum,—since action does not matter and inaction also is no object,—then the nature of the works also does not matter. Arjuna, once having attained knowledge, may continue to fight out the battle of Kurukshetra, following his

old Kshatriya nature, or he may leave it and live the life of the Sannyasin, following his new quietistic impulse. Which of these things he does, becomes quite indifferent; or rather the second is the better way, since it will discourage more quickly the impulses of Nature which still have a hold on his mind owing to past created tendency and, when his body has fallen from him, he will securely depart into the Infinite and Impersonal with no necessity of returning again to the trouble and madness of life in this transient and sorrowful world, *anityam asukham imam lokam.*

If this were so, the Gita would lose all its meaning; for its first and central object would be defeated. But the Gita insists that the nature of the action does matter and that there is a positive sanction for continuance in works, not only that one quite negative and mechanical reason, the objectless compulsion of Nature. There is still, after the ego has been conquered, a divine Lord and enjoyer of the sacrifice, *bhoktâram yajnatapasâm,* and there is still an object in the sacrifice. The impersonal Brahman is not the very last word, not the utterly highest secret of our being; for impersonal and personal, finite and infinite turn out to be only two opposite, yet concomitant aspects of a divine Being unlimited by these distinctions who is both these things at once. God is an ever unmanifest Infinite ever self-impelled to manifest himself in the finite; he is the great impersonal Person of whom all personalities are partial

appearances ; he is the Divine who reveals himself in the human being, the Lord seated in the heart of man. Knowledge teaches us to see all beings in the one Impersonal self, for so we are liberated from the separative ego-sense, and then through this delivering impersonality to see them in this God, *ātmani atho mayi,* "in the Self and then in Me." Our ego, our limiting personalities stand in the way of our recognising the Divine who is in all and in whom all have their being ; for, subject to personality, we see only such fragmentary aspects of Him as the finite appearances of things suffer us to seize. We have to arrive at him not through our lower personality, but through the high, infinite and impersonal part of our being, and that we find by becoming this self one in all in whose existence the whole world is comprised. This infinite containing, not excluding all finite appearances, this impersonal admitting, not rejecting all individualities and personalities, this immobile sustaining, pervading, containing, not standing apart from all the movement of Nature, is the clear mirror in which the Divine will reveal His being. Therefore it is to the Impersonal that we have first to attain ; through the cosmic deities, through the aspects of the finite alone the perfect knowledge of God cannot be totally obtained. But neither is the silent immobility of the impersonal Self, conceived as shut into itself and divorced from all that it sustains, contains and pervades, the whole all-revealing all-satisfying truth of the Divine. To

see that we have to look through its silence to the Purushottama, and he in his divine greatness possesses both the Akshara and the Kshara ; he is seated in the immobility, but he manifests himself in the movement and in all the action of cosmic Nature ; to him even after liberation the sacrifice of works in Nature continues to be offered.

The real goal of the Yoga is then a living and self-completing union with the divine Purushottama and is not merely a self-extinguishing immergence in the impersonal Being. To raise our whole existence to the Divine Being, to dwell in him, (*mayyeva nivasishyasi*), to be at one with him, unify our consciousness with his, to make our fragmentary nature a reflection of his perfect nature, to be inspired in our thought and sense wholly by the divine knowledge, to be moved in will and action utterly and faultlessly by the divine will, to lose desire in his love and delight, is man's perfection ; it is that which the Gita describes as the highest secret. It is the true goal and the last sense of human living and the highest step in our progressive sacrifice of works. For he remains to the end the master of works and the soul of sacrifice.

XIV

THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE WORKS

THIS then is the sense of the Gita's doctrine of sacrifice. Its full significance depends on the idea of the Purushottama which as yet is not developed, —we find it set forth clearly only much later in the eighteen chapters,—and therefore we have had to anticipate, at whatever cost of infidelity to the progressive method of the Gita's exposition, that central teaching. At present the Teacher simply gives a hint, merely adumbrates this supreme presence of the Purushottama and his relation to the immobile Self in whom it is our first business, our pressing spiritual need to find our poise of perfect peace and equality by attainment to the Brahmic condition. He speaks as yet not at all in set terms of the Purushottama, but of himself,— "I", Krishna, Narayana, the Avatar, the God in man who is also the Lord in the universe incarnated in the figure of the divine charioteer of Kurukshetra. "In the Self, then in Me," is the formula he gives, implying that the transcendence of the individual personality by seeing it as a "becoming" in the impersonal self-existent Being is simply a means of arriving at that great secret impersonal Personality, which is thus silent, calm and uplifted

above Nature in the impersonal Being, but also present and active in Nature in all these million becomings. Losing our lower individual personality in the Impersonal, we arrive finally at union with that supreme Personality which is not separate and individual, but yet assumes all individualities. Transcending the lower nature of the three gunas and seating the soul in the immobile Purusha beyond the three gunas, we can ascend finally into the higher nature of the infinite Godhead which is not bound by the three gunas even when it acts through Nature. Reaching the inner actionlessness of the silent Purusha, *naishkarmya,* and leaving Prakriti to do her works, we can attain supremely beyond to the status of the divine Mastery which is able to do all works and yet be bound by none. The idea of the Purushottama, seen here as the incarnate Narayana, Krishna, is therefore the key. Without it the withdrawal from the lower nature to the Brahmic condition leads necessarily to inaction of the liberated man, his indifference to the works of the world; with it the same withdrawal becomes a step by which the works of the world are taken up in the spirit, with the nature and in the freedom of the Divine. See the silent Brahman as the goal and the world with all its activities has to be forsaken; see God, the Divine, the Purushottama as the goal, superior to action yet its inner spiritual cause and object and original will, and the world with all its activities is conquered and possessed in a divine transcendence of the

world. It can become instead of a prison-house an opulent kingdom, *râjyam samriddham,* which we have conquered for the spiritual life by slaying the limitation of the tyrant ego and overcoming the bondage of our gaoler desires and breaking the prison of our individualistic possession and enjoyment. The liberated universalised soul becomes *swarât samrât,* self-ruler and emperor.

The works of sacrifice are thus vindicated as a means of liberation and absolute spiritual perfection, *samsiddhi.* So Janaka and other great Karmayogins of the mighty ancient Yoga attained to perfection, by equal and desireless works done as a sacrifice, without the least egoistic aim or attachment,—*karmanaiva hi samsiddhim âsthitâ janakâdayah.* So too and with the same desirelessness, after liberation and perfection, works can and have to be continued by us in a large divine spirit, with the calm high nature of a spiritual royalty. "Thou shouldst do works regarding also the holding together of the peoples, *lokasangraham evâpi sampaçyan kartum arhasi.* Whatsoever the Best doeth, that the lower kind of man puts into practice; the standard he creates, the people follows. O son of Pritha, I have no work that I need to do in all the three worlds, I have nothing that I have not gained and have yet to gain, and I abide verily in the paths of action," *varta eva cha karmani,—eva* implying, I abide in it and do not leave it as the Sannyasin thinks himself bound to abandon works. "For if I did not abide sleeplessly in the paths of action, men

follow in every way my path, these peoples would sink to destruction if I did not works and I should be the creator of confusion and slay these creatures. As those who know not act with attachment to the action, he who knows should act without attachment, having for his motive to hold together the peoples. He should not create a division of their understanding in the ignorant who are attached to their works; he should set them to all actions, doing them himself with knowledge and in Yoga." There are few more important passages in the Gita than these seven striking couplets.

But let us clearly understand that they must not be interpreted, as the modern pragmatic tendency concerned much more with the present affairs of the world than with any high and far-off spiritual possibility seeks to interpret them, as no more than a philosophical and religious justification of social service, patriotic, cosmopolitan and humanitarian effort and attachment to the hundred eager social schemes and dreams which attract the modern intellect. It is not the rule of a large moral and intellectual altruism which is here announced, but that of a spiritual unity with God and with this world of beings who dwell in him and in whom he dwells. It is not an injunction to subordinate the individual to society and humanity or immolate egoism on the altar of the human collectivity, but to fulfil the individual in God and to sacrifice the ego on the one true altar of the all-embracing Divinity. The Gita moves on a plane of ideas and

experiences higher than those of the modern mind which is at the stage indeed of a struggle to shake off the coils of egoism, but is still mundane in its outlook and intellectual and moral rather than spiritual in its temperament. Patriotism, cosmopolitanism, service of society, collectivism, humanitarianism, the ideal or religion of humanity are admirable aids towards our escape from our primary condition of individual, family, social, national egoism into a secondary stage in which the individual realises, as far as it can be done on the intellectual, moral and emotional level,—on that level he cannot do it entirely in the right and perfect way, the way of the integral truth of his being,—the oneness of his existence with the existence of other beings. But the thought of the Gita reaches beyond to a tertiary condition of our developing self-consciousness towards which the secondary is only a partial stage of advance.

The Indian social tendency has been to subordinate the individual to the claims of society, but Indian religious thought and spiritual seeking have been always loftily individualistic in their aims. An Indian system of thought like the Gita's cannot possibly fail to put first the development of the individual, the highest need of the individual, his claim to discover and exercise his largest spiritual freedom, greatness, splendour, royalty,—his aim to develop into the illumined seer and king in the spiritual sense of seerdom and kingship, which was the first great charter of the ideal humanity

promulgated by the ancient Vedic sages. To exceed himself was their goal for the individual, not by losing all his personal aims in the aims of an organised human society, but by enlarging, heightening, aggrandizing himself into the consciousness of the Godhead. The rule given here by the Gita is the rule for the master man, the superman, the divinised human being, the Best, not in the sense of any Nietzschean, any onesided and lopsided, any Olympian, Apollonian or Dionysian, any angelic or demoniac supermanhood, but in that of the man whose whole personality has been offered up into the being, nature and consciousness of the one transcendent and universal Divinity and by loss of the smaller self has found its greater self, has been divinised.

To exalt oneself out of the lower imperfect Prakriti, *traigunyamayî mâyâ,* into unity with the divine being, consciousness and nature,* *madbhâvam âgatâh,* is the object of the Yoga. But when this object is fulfilled, when the man is in the Brahmic status and sees no longer with the false egoistic vision himself and the world, but sees all beings in the Self, in God, and the Self in all beings, God in all beings, what shall be the action,—since action there still is,—which results from that seeing, and what shall be the cosmic or individual motive of all his works? It is the question of Arjuna† but

* *Sâyujya, sâlokya* and *sâdriçya* or *sâdharmya. Sâdharmya* is becoming of one law of being and action with the Divine.

† *kim prabhâsheta kim âsîta vrajeta kim.*

answered from a standpoint other than that from which Arjuna had put it. The motive cannot be personal desire on the intellectual, moral, emotional level, for that has been abandoned,—even the moral motive has been abandoned, since the liberated man has passed beyond the lower distinction of sin and virtue, lives in a glorified purity beyond good and evil. It cannot be the spiritual call to his perfect self-development by means of disinterested works, for the call has been answered, the development is perfect and fulfilled. His motive of action can only be the holding together of the peoples, *chikîrshur lokasangraham*. This great march of the peoples towards a far-off divine ideal has to be held together, prevented from falling into the bewilderment, confusion and utter discord of the understanding which would lead to dissolution and destruction and to which the world moving forward in the night or dark twilight of ignorance would be too easily prone if it were not held together, conducted, kept to the great lines of its discipline by the illumination, by the strength, by the rule and example, by the visible standard and the invisible influence of its Best. The best, the individuals who are in advance of the general line and above the general level of the collectivity, are the natural leaders of mankind, for it is they who can point to the race both the way they must follow and the standard or ideal they have to keep to or to attain. But the divinised man is the Best in no ordinary sense of the word and his influence, his

example must have a power which that of no ordinarily superior man can exercise. What example then shall he give? What rule or standard shall he uphold?

In order to indicate more perfectly his meaning, the divine Teacher, the Avatar gives his own example, his own standard to Arjuna. "I abide in the path of action," he seems to say, "the path that all men follow ; thou too must abide in action. In the way I act, in that way thou too must act. I am above the necessity of works, for I have nothing to gain by them ; I am the Divine who possess all things and all beings in the world and I am myself beyond the world as well as in it and I do not depend upon anything or any one in all the three worlds for any object ; yet I act. This too must be thy manner and spirit of working. I, the Divine, am the rule and the standard ; it is I who make the path in which men tread ; I am the way and the goal. But I do all this largely, universally, visibly in part, but far more invisibly ; and men do not really know the way of my workings. Thou, when thou knowest and seest, when thou hast become the divinised man, must be the individual power of God, the human yet divine example, even as I am in my avatars. Most men dwell in the ignorance, the God-seer dwells in the knowledge ; but let him not confuse the minds of men by a dangerous example, rejecting in his superiority the works of the world ; let him not cut short the thread of action before it is spun out, let him not perplex and falsify

the stages and gradations of the ways I have hewn. The whole range of human action has been decreed by me with a view to the progress of man from the lower to the higher nature, from the apparent undivine to the conscious Divine. The whole range of human works must be that in which the God-knower shall move. All individual, all social action, all the works of the intellect, the heart and the body are still his, not any longer for his own separate sake, but for the sake of God in the world, of God in all beings and that all those beings may move forward, as he has moved, by the path of works towards the discovery of the Divine in themselves. Outwardly his actions may not seem to differ essentially from theirs; battle and rule as well as teaching and thought, all the various commerce of man with man may fall in his range; but the spirit in which he does them must be very different, and it is that spirit which by its influence shall be the great attraction drawing men upwards to his own level, the great lever lifting the mass of men higher in their ascent."

The giving of the example of God himself to the liberated man is profoundly significant; for it reveals the whole basis of the Gita's philosophy of divine works. The liberated man is he who has exalted himself into the divine nature and according to that divine nature must be his actions. But what is the divine nature? It is not entirely and solely that of the Akshara, the immobile, inactive, impersonal self; for that by itself would lead the

liberated man to actionless immobility. It is not characteristically that of the Kshara, the multitudinous, the personal, the Purusha self-subjected to Prakriti; for that by itself would lead him back into subjection to his personality and to the lower nature and its qualities. It is the nature of the Purushottama who holds both these together and by his supreme divinity reconciles them in a divine reconciliation which is the highest secret of his being, *rahasyam hyetad uttamam*. He is not the doer of works in the personal sense of our action involved in Prakriti; for God works through his power, conscious nature, effective force,—Shakti, Maya, Prakriti,—but yet above it, not involved in it, not subject to it, not unable to lift himself beyond the laws, workings, habits of action it creates, not affected or bound by them, not unable to distinguish himself, as we are unable, from the workings of life, mind and body. He is the doer of works who acts not, *kartâram akartâram*. "Know me" says Krishna, "for the doer of this (the fourfold law of human workings) who am yet the imperishable non-doer. Works fix not themselves on me (*na limpanti*), nor have I desire for the fruits of action." But neither is he the inactive, impassive, unpuissant Witness and nothing else; for it is he who works in the steps and measures of his power; every movement of it, every particle of the world of beings it forms is instinct with his presence, full of his consciousness, impelled by his will, shaped by his knowledge.

He is, besides, the Supreme without qualities who is possessed of all qualities, *nirguno guni*. He is not bound by any mode of nature or action, nor consists, as our personality consists, of a sum of qualities, modes of nature, characteristic operations of the mental, moral, emotional, vital, physical being, but is the source of all modes and qualities, capable of developing any he wills in whatever way and to whatever degree he wills; he is the infinite being of which they are ways of becoming, the immeasurable quantity and unbound ineffable of which they are measures, numbers and figures, which they seem to rhythmise and arithmise in the standards of the universe. Yet neither is he merely an impersonal indeterminate, nor a mere stuff of conscious existence for all determinations and personalisings to draw upon for their material, but a supreme Being, the one original conscious Existent, the perfect Personality capable of all relations even to the most human, concrete and intimate; for he is friend, comrade, lover, playmate, guide, teacher, master, ministrant of knowledge or ministrant of joy, yet in all relations unbound, free and absolute. This too the divinised man becomes in the measure of his attainment, impersonal in his personality, unbound by quality or action even when maintaining the most personal and intimate relations with men, unbound by any *dharma* even when following in appearance this or that *dharma*.

* *Upanishad*.

Neither the dynamism of the kinetic man nor the actionless light of the ascetic or quietist, neither the vehement personality of the man of action nor the indifferent impersonality of the philosophic sage is the complete divine ideal. These are the two conflicting standards of the man of this world and the ascetic or the quietist philosopher, one immersed in the action of the Kshara, the other striving to dwell entirely in the peace of the Akshara; but the complete divine ideal proceeds from the nature of the Purushottama which transcends this conflict and reconciles all divine possibilities.

The kinetic man is not satisfied with any ideal which does not depend upon the fulfilment of this cosmic nature, this play of the three qualities of that nature, this human activity of mind and heart and body. The highest fulfilment of that activity, he might say, is my idea of human perfection, of the divine possibility in man; some ideal that satisfies the intellect, the heart, the moral being, some ideal of our human nature in its action can alone satisfy the human being; he must have something that he can seek in the workings of his mind and life and body. For that is his nature, his *dharma,* and how can he be fulfilled in something outside his nature? For to his nature each being is bound and within it he must seek for his perfection. According to our human nature must be our human perfection; and each man must strive for it according to the line of his personality, his *swadharma,* but in life, in

action, not outside life and action. Yes, there is a truth in that, replies the Gita ; the fulfilment of God in man, the play of the Divine in life is part of the ideal perfection. But if you seek it only in the external, in life, in the principle of action, you will never find it ; for you will then not only act according to your nature, which is in itself a rule of perfection, but you will be—and this is a rule of the imperfection—eternally subject to its modes, its dualities of liking and dislike, pain and pleasure and especially to the rajasic mode with its principle of desire and its snare of wrath and grief and longing,—the restless, all-devouring principle of desire, the insatiable fire which besieges your worldly action, the eternal enemy of knowledge by which it is covered over here in your nature as is a fire by smoke or a mirror by dust and which you must slay in order to live in the calm, clear, luminous truth of the spirit. The senses, mind and intellect are the seat of this eternal cause of imperfection and yet it is within this sense, mind and intellect, this play of the lower nature that you would limit your search for perfection! The effort is vain. The kinetic side of your nature must first seek to add to itself the quietistic ; you must uplift yourself beyond this lower nature to that which is above the three gunas, that which is founded in the highest principle, in the soul. Only when you have attained to peace of soul, can you become capable of a free and divine action.

The quietist, the ascetic on the other hand

cannot see any possibility of perfection into which life and action enter. Are they not the very seat of bondage and imperfection? Is not all action imperfect in its nature, like a fire that must produce smoke, is not the principle of action itself rajasic, the father of desire, a cause that must have its effect of obscuration of knowledge, its round of longing and success and failure, its oscillations of joy and grief, its duality of virtue and sin? God may be in the world, but he is not of the world; he is a God of renunciation and not the Master or cause of our works; the master of our works is desire and the cause of works is ignorance. If the world, the Kshara is in a sense a manifestation or a *lîlâ* of the Divine, it is an imperfect play with the ignorance of Nature, an obscuration rather than a manifestation. That is surely evident from our very first glance at the nature of the world and does not the fullest experience of the world teach us always the same truth? is it not a wheel of the ignorance binding the soul to continual birth by the impulse of desire and action until at last that is exhausted or cast away? Not only desire, but action also must be flung away; seated in the silent self the soul will then pass away into the motionless, actionless, imperturbable, absolute Brahman. To this objection of the impersonalising quietist the Gita is at more pains to answer than to that of the man of the world, the kinetic individual. For this quietism having hold of a higher and more powerful truth which is yet not the whole or the highest truth, its pro-

mulgation as the universal, complete, highest ideal of human life is likely to be more confusing and disastrous to the advance of the human race towards its goal than the error of an exclusive kinetism. A strong onesided truth, when set forth as the whole truth, creates a strong light but also a strong confusion ; for the very strength of its element of truth increases the strength of its element of error. The error of the kinetic ideal can only prolong the ignorance and retard the human advance by setting it in search of perfection where perfection cannot be found ; but the error of the quietistic ideal contains in itself the very principle of world-destruction. Were I to act upon it, says Krishna, I should destroy the peoples and be the author of confusion ; and though the error of an individual human being, even though a nearly divine man, cannot destroy the whole race, it may produce a widespread confusion which may be in its nature destructive of the principle of human life and disturbing to the settled line of its advance.

Therefore the quietistic tendency in man must be got to recognise its own incompleteness and admit on an equality with itself the truth which lies behind the kinetic tendency,—the fulfilment of God in man and the presence of the Divine in all the action of the human race. God is there not only in the silence, but in the action ; the quietism of the impassive soul unaffected by Nature and the kinetism of the soul giving itself to Nature so that the great world-sacrifice, the Purusha-Yajna, may

be effected, are not a reality and a falsehood in perpetual struggle nor yet two hostile realities, one superior, the other inferior, each fatal to the other ; they are the double term of the divine manifestation. The Akshara alone is not the whole key of their fulfilment, not the very highest secret. The double fulfilment, the reconciliation is to be sought in the Purushottama represented here by Krishna, at once supreme Being, Lord of the worlds and Avatar. The divinised man entering into his divine nature will act even as he acts ; he will not give himself up to inaction. The Divine is at work in man in the ignorance and at work in man in the knowledge. To know Him is our soul's highest welfare and the condition of its perfection, but to know and realise Him as a transcendent peace and silence is not all ; the secret that has to be learned is at once the secret of the eternal and unborn Divine and the secret of the divine birth and works, *janma karma cha me divyam*. The action which proceeds from that knowledge, will be free from all bondage ; "he who so knoweth me" says the Teacher, "is not bound by works." If the escape from the obligation of works and desire and from the wheel of rebirth is to be the aim and the ideal, then this knowledge is to be taken as the true, the broad way of escape ; for, says the Gita, "he who knows in their right principles my divine birth and works, comes when he leaves his body, not to rebirth, but to Me, O Arjuna." Through the knowledge and possession of the divine birth he comes to the unborn and

imperishable Divine who is the self of all beings, *ajo avyaya âtmâ ;* through the knowledge and execution of divine works to the Master of works, the lord of all beings, *bhûtânâm îçwara.* He lives in that unborn being ; his works are those of that universal Mastery.

XV

THE POSSIBILITY AND PURPOSE OF AVATARHOOD

In speaking of this Yoga in which action and knowledge become one, the Yoga of the sacrifice of works with knowledge, in which works are fulfilled in knowledge, knowledge supports, changes and enlightens works, and both are offered to the Purushottama, the supreme Divinity who becomes manifest within us as Narayana, Lord of all our being and action seated secret in our hearts for ever, who becomes manifest even in the human form as the Avatar, the divine birth taking possession of our humanity, Krishna has declared in passing that this was the ancient and original Yoga which he gave to Vivasvan, the Sun-God, Vivasvan gave it to Manu, the father of men, Manu gave it to Ikshvaku, head of the solar line, and so it came down from royal sage to royal sage till it was lost in the great lapse of Time and is now renewed for Arjuna, because he is the lover and devotee, friend and comrade of the Avatar. For this, he says, is the highest secret,—thus claiming for it a superiority to all other forms of Yoga, because those others lead to the impersonal Brahman or to a personal Deity, to a liberation in actionless knowledge or a

liberation in absorbed beatitude, but this gives the highest secret and the whole secret; it brings us to divine peace and divine works, to divine knowledge, action and ecstasy unified in a perfect freedom; it unites into itself all the Yogic paths as the highest being of the Divine reconciles and makes one in itself all the different and even contrary powers and principles of its manifested being. Therefore this Yoga of the Gita is not, as some contend, only the Karmayoga, one and the lowest, according to them, of the three paths, but a highest Yoga synthetic and integral directing Godward all the powers of our being.

Arjuna takes the declaration about the transmission of the Yoga in its most physical sense,—there is another significance in which it can be taken,—and asks how the Sun-God, one of the first-born of beings, ancestor of the Solar dynasty, can have received the Yoga from the man Krishna who is only now born into the world. Krishna does not reply, as we might have expected him to have done, that it was as the Divine who is the source of all knowledge that he gave the Word to the Deva who is his form of knowledge, giver of all inner and outer light,—*bhargo savitur devasya yo no dhiyah prachodayât;* he accepts instead the opportunity which Arjuna gives him of declaring his concealed Godhead, a declaration for which he had prepared when he gave himself as the divine example for the worker who is not bound by his works, but which he has not yet quite explicitly made. He now

openly announces himself as the incarnate Godhead, the Avatar.

We have had occasion already, when speaking of the divine Teacher, to state briefly the doctrine of Avatarhood as it appears to us in the light of Vedanta, the light in which the Gita presents it to us. We must now look a little more closely at this Avatarhood and at the significance of the divine Birth of which it is the outward expression ; for that is a link of considerable importance in the integral teaching of the Gita. And we may first translate the words of the Teacher himself in which the nature and purpose of Avatarhood are given summarily and remind ourselves also of other passages or references which bear upon it. "Many are my lives that are past, and thine also, O Arjuna ; all of them I know, but thou knowest not, O scourge of the foe. Though I am the unborn, though I am imperishable in my self-existence, though I am the Lord of all existences, yet I stand upon my own Nature and I come into birth by my self-Maya. For whensoever there is the fading of the Dharma and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loose myself forth into birth. For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right I am born from age to age. He who knoweth thus in its right principles my divine birth and my divine work, when he abandons his body, comes not to rebirth, he comes to Me, O Arjuna. Delivered from liking and fear and wrath, full of me, taking refuge in me, many

purified by austerity of knowledge have arrived at my nature of being (*madbhâvam*, the divine nature of the Purushottama). As men approach me, so I accept them to my love (*bhajâmi*); men follow in every way my path, O son of Pritha."

But most men, the Gita goes on to say, desiring the fulfilment of their works, sacrifice to the gods, to various forms and personalities of the one Godhead, because the fulfilment (*siddhi*) that is born of works,—of works without knowledge,—is very swift and easy in the human world; it belongs indeed to that world alone. The other, the divine self-fulfilment in man by the sacrifice with knowledge to the supreme Godhead, is much more difficult; its results belong to a higher plane of existence and they are less easily grasped. Men therefore have to follow the fourfold law of their nature and works and on this plane of mundane action they seek the Godhead through his various qualities. But, says Krishna, though I am the doer of the fourfold works and creator of its fourfold law, yet I must be known also as the non-doer, the imperishable, the immutable Self. "Works affect me not, nor have I desire for the fruit of works;" for God is the impersonal beyond this egoistic personality and this strife of the modes of Nature, and as the Purushottama also, the impersonal Personality, he possesses this supreme freedom even in works. Therefore the doer of divine works even while following the fourfold law has to know and live in that which is beyond, in the impersonal Self

and so in the supreme Godhead. "He who thus knows me is not bound by his works. So knowing was work done by the men of old who sought liberation; do therefore, thou also, work of that more ancient kind done by ancient men."

The second portion of these passages which has here been given in substance, explains the nature of divine works, *divyam karma,* with the principle of which we have had to deal in the last essay; the first, which has been fully translated, explains the way of the divine birth, *divyam janma,* the Avatarhood. But we have to remark carefully that the upholding of Dharma in the world is not the only object of the descent of the Avatar, that great mystery of the Divine manifest in humanity; for the upholding of the Dharma is not an all-sufficient object in itself, not the supreme possible aim for the manifestation of a Christ, a Krishna, a Buddha, but is only the general condition of a higher aim and a more supreme and divine utility. For there are two aspects of the divine birth; one is a descent, the birth of God in humanity, the Godhead manifesting itself in the human form and nature, the eternal Avatar; the other is an ascent, the birth of man into the Godhead, man rising into the divine nature and consciousness, *madbhâvam âgatah;* it is the being born anew in a second birth of the soul. It is that new birth which Avatarhood and the upholding of the Dharma are intended to serve. This double aspect in the Gita's doctrine of Avatarhood is apt to be missed by the cursory reader

satisfied, as most are, with catching a superficial view of its profound teachings, and it is missed too by the formal commentator petrified in the rigidity of the schools. Yet it is necessary, surely, to the whole meaning of the doctrine. Otherwise the Avatar idea would be only a dogma, a popular superstition, or an imaginative or mystic deification of historical or legendary supermen, not what the Gita makes all its teaching, a deep philosophical and religious truth and an essential part of or step to the supreme mystery of all, *rahasyam uttamam*.

If there were not this rising of man into the Godhead to be helped by the descent of God into humanity, Avatarhood for the sake of the Dharma would be an otiose phenomenon, since mere Right, mere justice or standards of virtue can always be upheld by the divine omnipotence through its ordinary means, by great men or great movements, by the life and work of sages and kings and religious teachers, without any actual incarnation. The Avatar comes as the manifestation of the divine nature in the human nature, the apocalypse of its Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood, in order that the human nature may by moulding its principle, thought, feeling, action, being on the lines of that Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood transfigure itself into the divine. The law, the Dharma which the Avatar establishes is given for that purpose chiefly; the Christ, Krishna, Buddha stands in its centre as the gate, he makes through himself the way men shall follow. That is why

each Incarnation holds before men his own example and declares of himself that he is the way and the gate ; he declares too the oneness of his humanity with the divine being, declares that the Son of Man and the Father above from whom he has descended are one, that Krishna in the human body, *mânushîm tanum âçritam,* and the supreme Lord and Friend of all creatures are but two revelations of the same divine Purushottama, revealed there in his own being, revealed here in the type of humanity.

That the Gita contains as its kernel this second and real object of the Avatarhood, is evident even from this passage by itself rightly considered ; but it becomes much clearer if we take it, not by itself,—always the wrong way to deal with the texts of the Gita,—but in its right close connection with other passages and with the whole teaching. We have to remember and take together its doctrine of the one Self in all, of the Godhead seated in the heart of every creature, its teaching about the relations between the Creator and his creation, its strongly emphasised idea of the *vibhûti,*—noting too the language in which the Teacher gives his own divine example of selfless works which applies equally to the human Krishna and the divine Lord of the worlds, and giving their due weight to such passages as that in the ninth chapter "Deluded minds despise me lodged in the human body because they know not my supreme nature of being, Lord of all existences" ; and we have to read in the light of

these ideas this passage we find before us and its declaration that by the knowledge of his divine birth and divine works man comes to the Divine and by becoming full of him and even as he and taking refuge in him they arrive at his nature and status of being, *madbhâvam*. For then we shall understand the divine birth and its object, not as an isolated and miraculous phenomenon, but in its proper place in the whole scheme of the world-manifestation ; without that we cannot arrive at its divine mystery, but shall either scout it altogether or accept it ignorantly and, it may be, superstitiously or fall into the petty and superficial ideas of the modern mind about it by which it loses all its inner and helpful significance.

For to the modern mind Avatarhood is one of the most difficult to accept or to understand of all the ideas that are streaming in from the East upon the rationalised human consciousness. It is apt to take it at the best for a mere figure for some high manifestation of human power, character, genius, great work done for the world or in the world, and at the worst to regard it as a superstition,—to the heathen a foolishness and to the Greeks a stumbling-block. The materialist. necessarily, cannot even look at it, sincc he does not believe in God ; to the rationalist or the Deist it is a folly and a thing of derision ; to the thoroughgoing dualist who sees an unbridgeable gulf between the human and the divine nature, it sounds like a blasphemy. The rationalist objects that if God exists, he is extra-

cosmic or supracosmic and does not intervene in the affairs of the world, but allows them to be governed by a fixed machinery of law,—he is, in fact, a sort of far-off constitutional monarch or spiritual King Log, at the best an indifferent inactive Spirit behind the activity of Nature, like some generalised or abstract witness Purusha of the Sankhyas; he is pure Spirit and cannot put on a body, infinite and cannot be finite as the human being is finite, the ever unborn creator and cannot be the creature born into the world,—these things are impossible even to his absolute omnipotence. To these objections the thoroughgoing dualist would add that God is in his person, his role and his nature different and separate from man; the perfect cannot put on human imperfection; the unborn personal God cannot be born as a human personality; the Ruler of the worlds cannot be limited in a nature-bound human action and in a perishable human body. These objections, so formidable at first sight to the reason, seem to have been present to the mind of the Teacher in the Gita when he says that although the Divine is unborn, imperishable in his self-existence, the Lord of all beings, yet he assumes birth by a supreme resort to the action of his Nature and by force of his self-Maya; that he whom the deluded despise because lodged in a human body, is verily in his supreme being the Lord of all; that he is in the action of the divine consciousness the creator of the fourfold Law and the doer of the works of the world

and at the same time in the silence of the divine consciousness the impartial witness of the works of his own Nature,— for he is always, beyond both the silence and the action, the supreme Purushottama. And the Gita is able to meet all these oppositions and to reconcile all these contraries because it starts from the Vedantic view of existence, of God and the universe.

For in the Vedantic view of things all these apparently formidable objections are null and void from the beginning. The idea of the Avatar is not indeed indispensable to its scheme, but it comes in naturally into it as a perfectly rational and logical conception. For all here is God, is the Spirit or Self-existence, is Brahman, *ekamevâdwitîyam*,— there is nothing else, nothing other and different from it and there can be nothing else, can be nothing other and different from it ; Nature is and can be nothing else than a power of the divine consciousness ; all beings are and can be nothing else than inner and outer, subjective and objective soul-forms and bodily forms of the divine being which exist in or result from the power of its consciousness. Far from the Infinite being unable to take on finiteness, the whole universe is nothing else but that ; we can see, look as we may, nothing else at all in the whole wide world we inhabit. Far from the Spirit being incapable of form or disdaining to connect itself with form of matter or mind and to assume a limited nature or a body, all here is nothing but that, the world exists only by that connection, that assump-

tion. Far from the world being a mechanism of law with no soul or spirit intervening in the movement of its forces or the action of its minds and bodies,—only some original indifferent Spirit passively existing somewhere outside or above it,—the whole world and every particle of it is on the contrary nothing but the divine force in action and that divine force determines and governs its every movement, inhabits its every form, possesses here every soul and mind; all is in God and in him moves and has its being, in all he is, acts and displays his being; every creature is the disguised Narayana.

Far from the unborn being unable to assume birth, all beings are even in their individuality unborn spirits, eternal without beginning or end, and in their essential existence and their universality all are the one unborn Spirit of whom birth and death are only a phenomenon of the assumption and change of forms. The assumption of imperfection by the perfect is the whole mystic phenomenon of the universe; but the imperfection appears in the form and action of the mind or body assumed, subsists in the phenomenon,—in that which assumes it there is no imperfection, even as in the Sun which illumines all there is no defect of light or of vision, but only in the capacities of the individual organ of vision. Nor does God rule the world from some remote heaven, but by his intimate omnipresence; each finite working of force is an act of infinite Force and not of a limited separate

self-existent energy labouring in its own underived strength; in every finite working of will and knowledge we can discover, supporting it, an act of the infinite all-will and all-knowledge. God's rule is not an absentee, foreign and external government; he governs all because he exceeds all, but also because he dwells within all movements and is their absolute soul and spirit. Therefore none of the objections opposed by our reason to the possibility of Avatarhood can stand in their principle; for the principle is a vain division made by the intellectual reason which the whole phenomenon and the whole reality of the world are busy every moment contradicting and disproving.

But still, apart from the possibility, there is the question of the actual divine working,—whether actually the divine consciousness does appear coming forward from beyond the veil to act at all directly in the phenomenal, the finite, the mental and material, the limited, the imperfect. The finite is indeed nothing but a definition, a face-value of the Infinite's self-representations to its own variations of consciousness; the real value of each finite phenomenon is an infinite in its self-existence, whatever it may be in the action of its phenomenal nature, its temporal self-representation. The man is not, when we look closely, himself alone, a rigidly separate self-existent individual, but humanity in a mind and body of itself; and humanity too is no rigidly separate self-existent species or genus, it is the All-existence, the universal Godhead figuring

itself in the type of humanity; there it works out certain possibilities, develops, evolves, as we now say, certain powers of its manifestations. What it evolves, is itself, is the Spirit.

For what we mean by Spirit is self-existent being with an infinite power of consciousness and unconditioned delight in its being; it is either that or nothing, or at least nothing which has anything to do with man and the world or with which, therefore, man or the world has anything to do. Matter, body is only a massed motion of force of conscious being employed as a starting-point for the variable relations of consciousness working through its power of sense; nor is Matter anywhere really void of consciousness, for even in the atom, the cell there is, as is now made abundantly clear in spite of itself by modern Science, a power of will, an intelligence at work; but that power is the power of will and intelligence of the Self, Spirit or Godhead within it, it is not the separate, self-derived will or idea of the mechanical cell or atom. This universal will and intelligence, involved, develops its powers from form to form, and on earth at least it is in man that it draws nearest to the full divine and there first becomes, even in the outward intelligence in the form, obscurely conscious of its divinity. But still there too there is a limitation, there is that imperfection of the manifestation which prevents the lower forms from having the self-knowledge of their identity with the Divine. For in each limited being the limitation of the phenomenal action is

accompanied by a limitation also of the phenomenal consciousness which defines the nature of the being and makes the inner difference between creature and creature. The Divine works behind indeed and governs its special manifestation through this outer and imperfect consciousness and will, but is itself secret in the cavern, *guhâyâm,* as the Veda puts it, or as the Gita expresses it, "In the heart of all existences the Lord abides turning all existences as if mounted on a machine by Maya." This secret working of the Lord hidden in the heart from the egoistic nature-consciousness through which he works, is God's universal method with creatures. Why then should we suppose that in any form he comes forward into the frontal, the phenomenal consciousness for a more direct and consciously divine action? Obviously, if at all, then to break the veil between himself and humanity which man limited in his own nature could never lift.

The Gita explains the ordinary imperfect action of the creature by its subjection to the mechanism of Prakriti and its limitation by the self-representations of Maya. These two terms are only complementary aspects of one and the same effective force of divine consciousness. Maya is not essentially illusion,—the element or appearance of illusion only enters in by the ignorance of the lower Prakriti, Maya of the three modes of Nature,—it is the divine consciousness in its power of various self-representation of its being, while Prakriti is the

effective force of that consciousness which operates to work out each such self-representation according to its own law and fundamental idea, *swabhâva* and *swadharma,* in its own proper quality and particular force of working, *guna-karma.* "Leaning—pressing down upon my own Nature (Prakriti) I create (loose forth into various being) all this multitude of existences, all helplessly subject to the control of Nature." Those who know not the Divine lodged in the human body, are ignorant of it because they are grossly subject to this mechanism of Prakriti, helplessly subject to its mental limitations and acquiescent in them, and dwell in an Asuric nature that deludes with desire and bewilders with egoism the will and the intelligence, *mohinîm prakritim âçritâh.* For the Purushottama within is not readily manifest to any and every being; he conceals himself in a thick cloud of darkness or a bright cloud of light, utterly he envelops and wraps himself in his Yogamaya.* "All this world" says the Gita "because it is bewildered by the three states of being determined by the modes of Nature, fails to recognise me; for this my divine Maya of the modes of Nature is hard to get beyond; those cross beyond it who approach Me; but those who dwell in the Asuric nature of being, have their knowledge reft from them by Maya." In other words, there is the inherent consciousness of the divine in all, for in all the Divine dwells; but he dwells there

* *Nâham prakâçah sarvasya yogamâyâ-samâvritah.*

covered by his Maya and the essential self-knowledge of beings is reft from them, turned into the error of egoism by the action of Maya, the action of the mechanism of Prakriti. Still by drawing back from the mechanism of Nature to her inner and secret Master man can become conscious of the indwelling Divinity.

Now it is notable that with a slight but important variation of language the Gita describes in the same way both the action of the Divine in bringing about the ordinary birth of creatures and his action in his birth as the Avatar. "Leaning upon my own Nature, *prakritim svâm avashtabhya,*" it will say later "I loose forth variously, *visrijâmi,* this multitude of creatures helplessly subject owing to the control of Prakriti, *avaçam prakriter vaçât.*" "Standing upon my own Nature," it says here, "I am born by my self-Maya, *prakritim svâm adhishthâya...âtmamâyayâ,* I loose forth myself, *âtmânam srijâmi.*" The action implied in the word *avashtabhya* is a forceful downward pressure by which the object controlled is overcome, oppressed, blocked or limited in its movement or working and becomes helplessly subject to the controlling power, *avaçam vaçât ;* Nature in this action becomes mechanical and its multitude of creatures are held helpless in the mechanism, not lords of their own action. On the contrary the action implied in the word *adhishthâya* is a dwelling in, but also a standing upon and over the Nature, a conscious control and government by the indwell-

ing Godhead, *adhishthâtrî devatâ,* in which the Purusha is not helplessly driven by the Prakriti through ignorance, but rather the Prakriti is full of the light and the will of the Purusha. Therefore in the normal birth that which is loosed forth, —created, as we say,—is the multitude of creatures or becomings, *bhûtagrâmam ;* in the divine birth that which is loosed forth, self-created, is the self-conscious self-existent being, *âtmânam ;* for the Vedantic distinction between *âtmâ* and *bhûtâni* is that which is made in European philosophy between the Being and its becomings. In both cases Maya is the means of the creation or manifestation, but in the divine birth it is by self-Maya, *âtma-mâyayâ,* not the involution in the lower Maya of the ignorance, but the conscious action of the self-existent Godhead in its phenomenal self-representation, well aware of its operation and its purpose,—that which the Gita calls elsewhere Yoga-maya. In the ordinary birth Yogamaya is used by the Divine to envelop and conceal itself from the lower consciousness, so it becomes for us the means of the ignorance, *avidyâ-mâyâ ;* but it is by this same Yogamaya that self-knowledge also is made manifest in the return of our consciousness to the Divine, it is the means of the knowledge, *vidyâ-mâyâ ;* and in the divine birth it so operates—as the knowledge controlling and enlightening the works which are ordinarily done in the Ignorance.

The language of the Gita shows therefore that the divine birth is that of the conscious Godhead

in our humanity and essentially the opposite of the ordinary birth even though the same means are used, because it is not the birth into the Ignorance, but the birth of the knowledge, not a physical phenomenon, but a soul-birth. It is the Soul's coming into birth as the self-existent Being controlling consciously its becoming and not lost to self-knowledge in the cloud of the ignorance. It is the Soul born into the body as Lord of Nature, standing above and operating in her freely by its will, not entangled and helplessly driven round and round in the mechanism ; for it works in the knowledge and not, as most do, in the ignorance. It is the secret Soul in all coming forward from its governing secrecy behind the veil to possess wholly in a human type, but as the Divine, the birth which ordinarily it possesses only from behind the veil as the Ishwara while the outward consciousness in front of the veil is rather possessed than in possession because there it is a partially conscious being, the Jiva lost to self-knowledge and bound in its works through a phenomenal subjection to Nature. The Avatar* therefore is a direct manifestation in humanity by Krishna the divine Soul of that divine condition of being to which Arjuna, the human soul, the type of a highest human being, a Vibhuti, is called upon by the Teacher to arise, and to which he can only arise by climbing out of the ignorance

* The word Avatara means a descent; it is a coming down of the Divine below the line which divides the divine from the human world or status.

and limitation of his ordinary humanity. It is the manifestation from above of that which we have to develop from below; it is the descent of God into that divine birth of the human being into which we mortal creatures must climb; it is the attracting divine example given by God to man in the very type and form and perfected model of our human existence.

XVI

THE PROCESS OF AVATARHOOD

We see that the mystery of the divine Incarnation in man, the assumption by the Godhead of the human type and the human nature, is in the view of the Gita only the other side of the eternal mystery of human birth itself which is always in its essence, though not in its phenomenal appearance, even such a miraculous assumption. The eternal and universal self of every human being is God ; even his personal self is a part of the Godhead, *mamaivânça*,—not a fraction or fragment, surely, since we cannot think of God as broken up into little pieces, but a partial consciousness of the one Consciousness, a partial power of the one Power, a partial enjoyment of world-being by the one and universal Delight of being, and therefore in manifestation or, as we say, in Nature a limited and finite being of the one infinite and illimitable Being. The stamp of that limitation is an ignorance by which he forgets, not only the Godhead from which he came forth, but the Godhead which is always within him, there living in the secret heart of his own nature, there burning like a veiled Fire on the inner altar in his own temple-house of human consciousness.

He is ignorant because there is upon the eyes of his soul and all its organs the seal of that Nature, Prakriti, Maya, by which he has been put forth into manifestation out of God's eternal being; she has minted him like a coin out of the precious metal of the divine substance, but overlaid with a strong coating of the alloy of her phenomenal qualities, stamped with her own stamp and mark of animal humanity, and although the secret sign of the Godhead is there, it is at first indistinguishable and always with difficulty decipherable, not to be really discovered except by that initiation into the mystery of our own being which distinguishes a Godward from an earthward humanity. In the Avatar, the divinely-born Man, the real substance shines through the coating; the mark of the seal is there only for form, the vision is that of the secret Godhead, the power of the life is that of the secret Godhead, and it breaks through the seals of the assumed human nature; the sign of the Godhead, an inner soul-sign, not outward, not physical, stands out legible for all to read who care to see or who can see; for the Asuric nature is always blind to these things, it sees the body and not the soul, the external being and not the internal, the mask and not the Person. In the ordinary human birth the Nature-aspect of the universal Divine assuming humanity prevails; in the incarnation the God-aspect of the same phenomenon takes its place. In the one he allows the human nature to take possession of his partial being and to dominate it;

in the other he takes possession of his partial type of being and its nature and divinely dominates it. Not by evolution or ascent like the ordinary man, the Gita seems to tell us, not by a growing into the divine birth, but by a direct descent into the stuff of humanity and a taking up of its moulds.

But it is to assist that ascent or evolution the descent is made or accepted ; that the Gita makes very clear. It is, we might say, to exemplify the possibility of the Divine manifest in the human being, so that man may see what that is and take courage to grow into it. It is also to leave the influence of that manifestation vibrating in the earth-nature and the soul of that manifestation presiding over its upward endeavour. It is to give a spiritual mould of divine manhood into which the seeking soul of the human being can cast itself. It is to give a dharma, a religion—not a mere creed, but a method of inner and outer living,—a way, a rule and law of self-moulding by which he can grow towards divinity. It is too, since this growth, this ascent is no mere isolated and individual phenomenon, but like all in the divine world-activities a collective business, a work and the work for the race, to assist the human march, to hold it together in its great crises, to break the forces of the downward gravitation when they grow too insistent, to uphold or restore the great dharma of the Godward law in man's nature, to prepare even, however far off, the kingdom of God, the victory of the seekers of light and perfection, *sâdhûnâm,*

and the overthrow of those who fight for the continuance of the evil and the darkness. All these are recognised objects of the descent of the Avatar, and it is usually by his work that the mass of men seek to distinguish him and for that that they are ready to worship him. It is only the spiritual who see that this external Avatarhood is a sign, in the symbol of a human life, of the eternal inner Godhead making himself manifest in the field of their own human mentality and corporeality so that they can grow into unity with that and be possessed by it. The divine manifestation of a Christ, Krishna, Buddha in external humanity has for its inner truth the same manifestation of the eternal Avatar within in our own inner humanity. That which has been done in the outer human life of earth, may be repeated in the inner life of all human beings.

This is the object of the incarnation, but what is the method? First, we have the rational or minimising view of Avatarhood which sees in it only an extraordinary manifestation of the diviner qualities moral, intellectual and dynamic by which average humanity is exceeded. In this idea there is a certain truth. The Avatar is at the same time the Vibhuti. This Krishna who in his divine inner being is the Godhead in a human form, is in his outer human being the leader of his age, the great man of the Vrishnis. This is from the point of view of the Nature, not of the soul. The Divine manifests himself through infinite qualities of his nature and the intensity of the manifestation is

measured by their power and their achievement. The *vibhûti* of the Divine is therefore, impersonally, the manifest power of his quality, it is his outflowing, in whatever form, of Knowledge, Energy, Love, Strength and the rest; personally, it is the mental form and the animate being in whom this power is achieved and does its great works. A preeminence in this inner and outer achievement, a greater power of divine quality, an effective energy is always the sign. The human *vibhûti* is the hero of the race's struggle towards divine achievement, the hero in the Carlylean sense of heroism, a power of God in man. "I am Vasudeva (Krishna) among the Vrishnis," says the Lord in the Gita, "Dhananjaya (Arjuna) among the Pandavas, Vyasa among the sages, the seer-poet Ushanas among the seer-poets," the first in each category, the greatest of each group, the most powerfully representative of the qualities and works in which its characteristic soul-power manifests itself. This heightening of the powers of the being is a very necessary step in the progress of the divine manifestation. Every great man who rises above our average level, raises by that very fact our common humanity; he is a living assurance of our divine possibilities, a promise of the Godhead, a glow of the divine Light and a breath of the divine Power.

It is this truth which lies behind the natural human tendency to the deification of great minds and heroic characters; it comes out clearly enough in the Indian habit of mind which easily sees a

partial (*ança*) Avatar in great saints, teachers, founders, or most significantly in the belief of southern Vaishnavas that some of their saints were incarnations of the symbolic living weapons of Vishnu,—for that is what all great spirits are, living powers and weapons of the Divine in the upward march and battle. This idea is innate and inevitable in any mystic or spiritual view of life which does not draw an inexorable line between the being and nature of the Divine and our human being and nature ; it is the sense of the divine in humanity. But still the Vibhuti is not the Avatar ; otherwise Arjuna, Vyasa, Ushanas would be Avatars as well as Krishna, even if in a less degree of the power of Avatarhood. The divine quality is not enough ; there must be the inner consciousness of the Lord and Self governing the human nature by his divine presence. The heightening of the power of the qualities is part of the becoming, *bhûtagrâma,* an ascent in the ordinary manifestation ; in the Avatar there is the special manifestation, the divine birth from above, the eternal and universal Godhead descended into a form of individual humanity, *âtmânam srijâmi,* and conscious not only behind the veil but in the outward nature.

There is an intermediary idea, a more mystical view of Avatarhood which supposes that a human soul calls down this descent into himself and is either possessed by the divine consciousness or becomes an effective reflection or channel of it. This view rests upon certain truths of spiritual

experience. The divine birth in man, his ascent, is itself a growing of the human into the divine consciousness, and in its intensest culmination is a losing of the separate self in that. The soul merges its individuality in an infinite and universal being or loses it in the heights of a transcendent being; it becomes one with the Self, the Brahman, the Divine or, as it is sometimes more absolutely put, becomes the one Self, the Brahman, the Divine. The Gita itself speaks of the soul becoming the Brahman, *brahmabhûta,* and of its thereby dwelling in the Lord, in Krishna, but it does not, it must be marked, speak of it as becoming the Lord or the Purushottama, though it does declare that the Jiva himself is always Ishwara, the partial being of the Lord, *mamaivâṅçah.* For this greatest union, this highest becoming is still part of the ascent; while it is the divine birth to which every Jiva arrives, it is not the descent of the Godhead, not Avatarhood, but at most Buddhahood according to the doctrine of the Buddhists, it is the soul awakened from its present mundane individuality into an infinite superconsciousness. That need not carry with it either the inner consciousness or the characteristic action of the Avatar.

On the other hand, this entering into the divine consciousness may be attended by a reflex action of the Divine entering or coming forward into the human parts of our being, pouring himself into the nature, the activity, the mentality, the corporeality even of the man; and that may well be at least a

partial Avatarhood. The Lord stands in the heart, says the Gita,—by which it means of course the heart of the subtle being, the nodus of the emotions, sensations, mental consciousness, where the individual Purusha also is seated ;—but he stands there veiled, enveloped by his Maya. But above, on a plane within us but now superconscient to us, called heaven by the ancient mystics, the Lord and the Jiva stand together revealed as of one essence of being, the Father and the Son of certain symbolisms, the Divine Being and the divine Man who comes forth from Him born of the higher divine Nature,* the virgin Mother, *parâ prakriti, parâ mâyâ,* into the lower or human nature. This seems to be the inner doctrine of the Christian incarnation ; in its Trinity the Father is above in this inner Heaven ; the Son or supreme Prakriti become Jiva of the Gita descends as the divine Man upon earth, in the mortal body ; the Holy Spirit, pure Self, Brahmic consciousness is that which makes them one and that also in which they communicate ; for we hear of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus and it is the same descent which brings down the powers of the higher consciousness into the simple humanity of the Apostles.

But also the higher divine consciousness of the

* In the Buddhist legend the name of the mother of Buddha makes the symbolism clear; in the Christian the symbol seems to have been attached by a familiar mythopoeic process to the actual human mother of Jesus of Nazareth.

Purushottama may itself descend into the humanity and that of the Jiva disappear into it. This is said by his contemporaries to have happened in the occasional transfigurations of Chaitanya when he who in his normal consciousness was only the lover and devotee of the Lord and rejected all deification, became in these abnormal moments the Lord himself and so spoke and acted, with all the outflooding light and love and power of the divine Presence. Supposing this to be the normal condition, the human receptacle to be constantly no more than a vessel of this divine Presence and divine Consciousness, we should have the Avatar according to this intermediary idea of the incarnation. That easily recommends itself as possible to our human notions; for if the human being can elevate his nature so as to feel a unity with the being of the Divine and himself a mere channel of its consciousness, light, power, love, his own will and personality lost in that will and that being,—and this is a recognised spiritual status,—then there is no inherent impossibility of the reflex action of that Will, Being, Power, Love, Light, Consciousness occupying the whole personality of the human Jiva. And this would not be merely an ascent of our humanity into the divine birth and the divine nature, but a descent of the divine Purusha into humanity, an Avatar.

The Gita, however, goes much farther. It speaks clearly of the Lord himself being born; Krishna speaks of his many births that are past and

makes it clear by his language that it is not merely the receptive human being but the Divine of whom he makes this affirmation, because he uses the very language of the Creator, the same language which he will employ when he has to describe his creation of the world. "Although I am the unborn Lord of creatures, I create (loose forth) my *self* by my maya," presiding over the actions of my Prakriti. Here there is no question of the Lord and the human Jiva or of the Father and the Son, the divine Man, but only of the Lord and his Prakriti. The Divine descends by his own Prakriti into birth in its human form and type and brings into it the divine Consciousness and the divine Power, though consenting, though willing to act in the form, type, mould of humanity, and he governs its actions in the body as the indwelling and over-dwelling Soul, *adhishthâya.* From above he governs always, indeed, for so he governs all nature, the human included ; from within also he governs all nature, always, but hidden ; the difference here is that he is manifest, that the nature is conscious of the divine Presence as the Lord, the Inhabitant, and it is not by his secret will from above, "the will of the Father which is in heaven," but by his quite direct and apparent will that he moves the nature. And here there seems to be no room for the human intermediary ; for it is by resort to his own nature, *prakritim svâm,* and not the special nature of the Jiva that the Lord of all existence thus takes upon himself the human birth.

This doctrine is a hard saying, a difficult thing for the human reason to accept ; and for an obvious reason, because of the evident humanity of the Avatar. The Avatar is always a dual phenomenon of divinity and humanity ; the Divine takes upon himself the human nature with all its outward limitations and makes them the circumstances, means, instruments of the divine consciousness and the divine power, a vessel of the divine birth and the divine works. But so surely it must be, since otherwise the object of the Avatar's descent is not fulfilled ; for that object is precisely to show that the human birth with all its limitations can be made such a means and instrument of the divine birth and divine works, precisely to show that the human type of consciousness can be compatible with the divine essence of consciousness made manifest, can be converted into its vessel, drawn into nearer conformity with it by a change of its mould and a heightening of its powers of light and love and strength and purity ; and to show also how it can be done. If the Avatar were to act in an entirely supernormal fashion, this object would not be fulfilled. A merely supernormal or miraculous Avatar would be a meaningless absurdity ; not that there need be an entire absence of the use of supernormal powers such as Christ's so-called miracles of healing, for the use of supernormal powers is quite a possibility of human nature ; but there need not be that at all, nor in any case is it the root of the matter, nor would it at all do if the life were nothing

else but a display of supernormal fireworks. The Avatar does not come as a thaumaturgic magician, but as the divine leader of humanity and the exemplar of a divine humanity. Even human sorrow and physical suffering he must assume and use so as to show, first, how that suffering may be a means of redemption,—as did Christ,—secondly, to show how, having been assumed by the divine soul in the human nature, it can also be overcome in the same nature,—as did Buddha. The rationalist who would have cried to Christ, "If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross," or points out sagely that the Avatar was not divine because he died and died too by disease,—as a dog dieth,—knows not what he is saying: for he has missed the root of the whole matter. Even, the Avatar of sorrow and suffering must come before there can be the Avatar of divine joy; the human limitation must be assumed in order to show how it can be overcome; and the way and the extent of the overcoming, whether internal only or external also, depends upon the stage of the human advance; it must not be done by a nonhuman miracle.

The question then arises, and it is the sole real difficulty, for here the intellect falters and stumbles over its own limits, how is this human mind and body assumed? For they were not created suddenly and all of a piece, but by some kind of evolution, physical or spiritual or both. No doubt, the descent of the Avatar, like the divine birth from the other side, is essentially a spiritual phenomenon,

as is shown by the Gita's *âtmânam srijâmi*, it is a soul-birth; but still there is here an attendant physical birth. How then were this human mind and body of the Avatar created? If we suppose that the body is always created by the hereditary evolution, by inconscient Nature and its immanent Life-spirit without the intervention of the individual soul, the matter becomes simple. A physical and mental body is prepared fit for the divine incarnation by a pure or great heredity and the descending Godhead takes possession of it. But the Gita in this very passage applies the doctrine of reincarnation, boldly enough, to the Avatar himself, and in the usual theory of reincarnation the reincarnating soul by its past spiritual and psychological evolution itself determines and in a way prepares its own mental and physical body. The soul prepares its own body, the body is not prepared for it without any reference to the soul. Are we then to suppose an eternal or continual Avatar himself evolving, we might say, his own fit mental and physical body according to the needs and pace of the human evolution and so appearing from age to age, *yuge yuge*? In some such spirit some would interpret the ten incarnations of Vishnu, first in animal forms, then in the animal man, then in the dwarf man-soul, Vamana, the violent Asuric man, Rama of the axe, the divinely-natured man, a greater Rama, the awakened spiritual man, Buddha, and, preceding him in time, but final in place, the complete divine manhood, Krishna,—for the last

Avatar, Kalki, only accomplishes the work Krishna began,—he fulfils in power the great struggle which the previous Avatars prepared in all its potentialities. It is a difficult assumption to our modern mentality, but the language of the Gita seems to demand it. Or, since the Gita does not expressly solve the problem, we may solve it in some other way of our own, as that the body is prepared by the Jiva but assumed from birth by the Godhead or that it is prepared by one of the four Manus, *chatvâro manavah,* of the Gita, the spiritual Fathers of every human mind and body. This is going far into the mystic field from which the modern reason is still averse ; but once we admit Avatarhood, we have already entered into it and, once entered, may as well tread in it with firm footsteps.

There the Gita's doctrine of Avatarhood stands. We have had to advert to it at length in this aspect of its method, as we did to the question of its possibility, because it is necessary to look at it and face the difficulties which the reasoning mind of man is likely to offer to it. It is true that the physical Avatarhood does not fill a large space in the Gita, but still it does occupy a definite place in the chain of its teachings and is implied in the whole scheme, the very framework being the Avatar leading the *vibhûti,* the man who has risen to the greatest heights of mere manhood, to the divine birth and divine works. No doubt, too, the inner descent of the Godhead to raise the human soul into himself is the main thing,—it is the inner

Christ, Krishna or Buddha that matters. But just as the outer life is of immense importance for the inner development, so the external Avatarhood is of no mean importance for this great spiritual manifestation. The consummation in the mental and physical symbol assists the growth of the inner reality; afterwards the inner reality expresses itself with greater power in a more perfect symbolisation of itself through the outer life. Between these two, spiritual reality and mental and physical expression, acting and returning upon each other constantly the manifestation of the Divine in humanity has elected to move always in the cycles of its concealment and its revelation.

XVII

THE DIVINE BIRTH AND DIVINE WORKS

THE work for which the Avatar descends has like his birth a double sense and a double form. It has an outward side of the divine force acting upon the external world in order to maintain there and to reshape the divine law by which the Godward effort of humanity is kept from decisive retrogression and instead decisively carried forward in spite of the rule of action and reaction, the rhythm of advance and relapse by which Nature proceeds. It has an inward side of the divine force of the Godward consciousness acting upon the soul of the individual and the soul of the race, so that it may receive new forms of revelation of the Divine in man and may be sustained, renewed and enriched in its power of upward self-unfolding. The Avatar does not descend merely for a great outward action, as the pragmatic sense in humanity is too often tempted to suppose. Action and event have no value in themselves, but only take their value from the force which they represent and the idea which they symbolise and which the force is there to serve.

The crisis in which the Avatar appears, though apparent to the outward eye only as a crisis of events and great material changes, is always in its source

and real meaning a crisis in the consciousness of humanity when it has to undergo some grand modification and effect some new development. For this action of change a divine force is needed; but the force varies always according to the power of consciousness which it embodies; hence the necessity of a divine consciousness manifesting in the mind and soul of humanity. Where, indeed, the change is mainly intellectual and practical, the intervention of the Avatar is not needed; there is a great uplifting of consciousness, a great manifestation of power in which men are for the time being exalted above their normal selves, and this surge of consciousness and power finds its wave-crests in certain exceptional individuals, *vibhûtis,* whose action leading the general action is sufficient for the change intended. The Reformation in Europe and the French Revolution were crises of this character; they were not great spiritual events, but intellectual and practical changes, one in religious, the other in social and political ideas, forms and motives, and the modification of the general consciousness brought about was a mental and dynamic, but not a spiritual modification. But when the crisis has a spiritual seed or intention, then a complete or a partial manifestation of the God-consciousness in a human mind and soul comes as its originator or leader. That is the Avatar.

The outward action of the Avatar is described in the Gita as the restoration of the Dharma; when from age to age the Dharma fades, languishes, loses

force and its opposite arises, strong and oppressive, then the Avatar comes and raises it again to power ; and as then things in idea are always represented by things in action and by human beings who obey their impulsion, his mission is, in its most human and outward terms, to relieve the seekers of the Dharma who are oppressed by the reign of the reactionary darkness and to destroy the wrongdoers who seek to maintain the denial of the Dharma. But the language used can easily be given a poor and insufficient connotation which would deprive Avatarhood of all its spiritual depth of meaning. Dharma is a word which has an ethical and practical, a natural and philosophical and a religious and spiritual significance, and it may be used in any of these senses exclusive of the others, in a purely ethical, a purely philosophical or a purely religious sense. Ethically it means the law of righteousness, the moral rule of conduct, or in a still more outward and practical significance social and political justice, or even simply the observation of the social law. If used in this sense we shall have to understand that when unrighteousness, injustice and oppression prevail, the Avatar descends to deliver the good and destroy the wicked, to break down injustice and oppression and restore the ethical balance of mankind.

Thus the popular and mythical account of the Krishna avatar is that the unrighteousness of the Kurus as incarnated in Duryodhana and his brothers became so great a burden to the earth that she had

to call upon God to descend and lighten her load; accordingly Vishnu incarnated as Krishna, delivered the oppressed Pandavas and destroyed the unjust Kauravas. A similar account is given of the descent of the previous Vishnu avatars, of Rama to destroy the unrighteous oppression of Ravana, of Parashurama to destroy the unrighteous license of the military and princely caste, the Kshatriyas, of the dwarf Vamana to destroy the rule of the Titan Bali. But obviously the purely practical, ethical or social and political mission of the Avatar which is thus thrown into popular and mythical form, does not give a right account of the phenomenon of Avatarhood. It does not cover its spiritual sense, and if this outward utility were all, we should have to exclude Buddha and Christ whose mission was not at all to destroy evildoers and deliver the good, but to bring to all men a new spiritual message and a new law of divine growth and spiritual realisation. On the other hand, if we give to the word dharma only its religous sense, in which it means a law of religious and spiritual life, we shall indeed get to the kernel of the matter, but we shall be in danger of excluding a most important part of the work done by the Avatar. Always we see in the history of the divine incarnations the double work, and inevitably, because the Avatar takes up the workings of God in human life, the way of the divine Will and Wisdom in the world, and that always fulfils itself externally as well as internally, by inner progress in the soul and by an outer change in the life.

The Avatar may descend as a great spiritual teacher and saviour, the Christ, the Buddha, but always his work leads, after he has finished his earthly manifestation, to a profound and powerful change not only in the ethical, but in the social and outward life and ideals of the race. He may on the other hand, descend as an incarnation of the divine life, the divine personality and power in its characteristic action, for a mission ostensibly social, ethical and political, as is represented in the story of Rama or Krishna ; but always then this descent becomes in the soul of the race a permanent power for the inner living and the spiritual rebirth. It is indeed curious to note that the permanent, vital, universal effect of Buddhism and Christianity has been the force of their ethical, social and practical ideals and their influence even on the men and the ages which have rejected their religious and spiritual beliefs, forms and disciplines ; later Hinduism which rejected Buddha, his *sangha* and his *dharma,* bears the ineffaceable imprint of the social and ethical influence of Buddhism and its effect on the ideas and the life of the race, while in modern Europe, Christian only in name, humanitarianism is the translation into the ethical and social sphere and the aspiration to liberty, equality and fraternity the translation into the social and political sphere of the spiritual truths of Christianity, the latter especially being effected by men who aggressively rejected the Christian religion and spiritual discipline and by an age which in its intellectual

effort of emancipation tried to get rid of Christianity as a creed. On the other hand the life of Rama and Krishna belongs to the prehistoric past which has come down only in poetry and legend and may even be regarded as myths; but it is quite immaterial whether we regard them as myths or historical facts, because their permanent truth and value lie in their persistence as a spiritual form, presence, influence in the inner consciousness of the race and the life of the human soul. Avatarhood is a fact of divine life and consciousness which may realise itself in an outward action, but must persist, when that action is over and has done its work, in a spiritual influence; or may realise itself in a spiritual influence and teaching, but must then have its permanent effect, even when the new religion or discipline is exhausted, in the thought, temperament and outward life of mankind.

We must then, in order to understand the Gita's description of the work of the Avatar, take the idea of the Dharma in its fullest, deepest and largest conception, as the inner and the outer law by which the divine Will and Wisdom work out the spiritual evolution of mankind and its circumstances and results in the life of the race. Dharma in the Indian conception is not merely the good, the right, morality and justice, ethics; it is the whole government of all the relations of man with other beings, with Nature, with God, considered from the point of view of a divine principle working itself out in forms and laws of action, forms of the inner and

the outer life, orderings of relations of every kind in the world. Dharma* is both that which we hold to and that which holds together our inner and outer activities. In its primary sense it means a fundamental law of our nature which secretly conditions all our activities, and in this sense each being, type, species, individual, group has its own dharma. Secondly, there is the divine nature which has to develop and manifest in us, and in this sense dharma is the law of the inner workings by which that grows in our being. Thirdly, there is the law by which we govern our outgoing thought and action and our relations with each other so as to help best both our own growth and that of the human race towards the divine ideal.

Dharma is generally spoken of as something eternal and unchanging, and so it is in the fundamental principle, in the ideal, but in its forms it is continually changing and evolving, because man does not already possess the ideal or live in it, but aspires more or less perfectly towards it, is growing towards its knowledge and practice. And in this growth dharma is all that helps us to grow into the divine purity, largeness, light, freedom, power, strength, joy, love, good, unity, beauty, and against it stands its shadow and denial, all that resists its growth and has not undergone its law, all that has not yielded up and does not will to yield up its secret of divine values, but presents a front of per-

* The word means "holding" from the root *dhri*, to hold.

version and contradiction, of impurity, narrowness, bondage, darkness, weakness, vileness, discord and suffering and division, and the hideous and the crude, all that man has to leave behind in his progress. This is the *adharma,* not-dharma, which strives with and seeks to overcome the dharma, to draw backward and downward, the reactionary force which makes for evil, ignorance and darkness. Between the two there is perpetual battle and struggle, oscillation of victory and defeat in which sometimes the upward and sometimes the downward forces prevail. This has been typified in the Vedic image of the struggle between the Divine and the Titanic powers, the sons of the Light and the undivided Infinity and the children of the Darkness and Division, in Zoroastrianism by Ahuramazda and Ahriman, and in later religions in the contest between God and his angels and Satan or Iblis and his demons for the possession of human life and the human soul.

It is these things that condition and determine the work of the Avatar. In the Buddhistic formula the disciple takes refuge from all that opposes his liberation in three powers, the *dharma,* the *sangha,* the Buddha. So in Christianity we have the law of Christian living, the Church and the Christ. These three are always the necessary elements of the work of the Avatar. He gives a dharma, a law of self discipline by which to grow out of the lower into the higher life and which necessarily includes a rule of action and of relations with our

fellowmen and other beings, endeavour in the eightfold path or the law of faith, love and purity or any other such revelation of the nature of the divine in life. Then because every tendency in man has its collective as well as its individual aspect, because those who follow one way are naturally drawn together into spiritual companionship and unity, he establishes the *sangha,* the fellowship and union of those whom his personality and his teaching unite. In Vaishnavism there is the same trio, *bhâgavat, bhakta, bhagavân,*—the *bhâgavat,* which is the law of the Vaishnava dispensation of adoration and love, the *bhakta* representing the fellowship of those in whom that law is manifest, *bhagavân,* the divine Lover and Beloved in whose being and nature the divine law of love is founded and fulfils itself. The Avatar represents this third element, the divine personality, nature and being who is the soul of the dharma and the *sangha,* informs them with himself, keeps them living and draws men towards the felicity and the liberation.

In the teaching of the Gita, which is more catholic and complex than other specialised teachings and disciplines, these things assume a larger meaning. For the unity here is the all-embracing Vedantic unity by which the soul sees all in itself and itself in all and makes itself one with all beings. The dharma is therefore the taking up of all human relations into a higher divine meaning; starting from the established ethical,

social and religious rule which binds together the whole community in which the God-seeker lives, it lifts it up by informing it with the Brahmic consciousness ; the law it gives is the law of oneness, of equality, of liberated, desireless, God-governed action, of God-knowledge and self-knowledge enlightening and drawing to itself all the nature and all the action, drawing it towards divine being and divine consciousness, and of God-love as the supreme power and crown of the knowledge and the action. The idea of companionship and mutual aid in God-love and God-seeking which is at the basis of the idea of the *sangha* or divine fellowship, is brought in when the Gita speaks of the seeking of God through love and adoration, but the real *sangha* of this teaching is all humanity. The whole world is moving towards this dharma, each man according to his capacity,—"it is my path that men follow in every way,"—and the God-seeker, making himself one with all, making their joy and sorrow and all their life his own, the liberated made already one self with all beings, lives in the life of humanity, lives for the one Self in humanity, for God in all beings, acts for *lokasangraha,* for the maintaining of all in their dharma and the Dharma, for the maintenance of their growth in all its stages and in all its paths towards the Divine. For the Avatar here, though he is manifest in the name and form of Krishna, lays no exclusive stress on this one form of his human birth, but on that which it represents, the Divine, the Purushottama, of whom

live in the calm and bliss of the Divine.* Nor does it matter essentially in what form and name or putting forward what aspect of the Divine he comes ; for in all ways, varying with their nature, men are following the path set to them by the Divine which will in the end lead them to him and the aspect of him which suits their nature is that which they can best follow when he comes to lead them ; in whatever way men accept, love and take joy in God, in that way God accepts, loves and takes joy in man. *Ye yathâ mâm prapadyante tâns tathaiva bhajâmyaham.*

* *Janma karma cha me divyam evam yo vetti tattwatah.*
Tyaktvâ deham punarjanma naiti mâm eti so'rjuna.
Vitarâgabhayakrodhâ manmayâ mâm upâçritâh.
Bahavo jnânatapasâ putâ madbhavam âgatâh.

XVIII

THE DIVINE WORKER

To attain to the divine birth,—a divinising new birth of the soul into a higher consciousness,—and to do divine works both as a means towards that before it is attained and as an expression of it after it is attained, is then all the Karmayoga of the Gita. The Gita does not try to define works by any outward signs through which it can be recognisable to an external gaze, measurable by the criticism of the world; it deliberately renounces even the ordinary ethical distinctions by which men seek to guide themselves in the light of the human reason. The signs by which it distinguishes divine works are all profoundly intimate and subjective; the stamp by which they are known is invisible, spiritual, supra-ethical.

They are recognisable only by the light of the soul from which they come. For, it says "what is action and what is inaction, as to this even the sages are perplexed and deluded," because, judging by practical, social, ethical, intellectual standards, they discriminate by accidentals and do not go to the root of the matter; "I will declare to thee that action by the knowledge of which thou shalt be released from all ills. One has to understand about action

as well as to understand about wrong action and about inaction one has to understand; thick and tangled is the way of works." Action in the world is like a deep forest, *gahana,* through which man goes stumbling as best he can, by the light of the ideas of his time, the standards of his personality, his environment, or rather of many times, many personalities, layers of thought and ethics from many social stages all inextricably confused together, temporal and conventional amidst all their claim to absoluteness and immutable truth, empirical and irrational in spite of their aping of right reason. And finally the sage seeking in the midst of it all a highest foundation of fixed law and an original truth finds himself obliged to raise the last supreme question, whether all action and life itself are not a delusion and a snare and whether cessation from action, *akarma,* is not the last resort of the tired and disillusioned human soul. But, says Krishna, in this matter even the sages are perplexed and deluded. For by action, by works, not by inaction comes the knowledge and the release.

What then is the solution? what is that type of works by which we shall be released from the ills of life, from this doubt, this error, this grief, from this mixed, impure and baffling result even of our purest and best-intentioned acts, from these million forms of evil and suffering? No outward distinctions need be made, is the reply; no work the world needs, be shunned; no limit or hedge set round our human activities; on the contrary,

all actions should be done, but from a soul in Yoga with the Divine, *yuktah kr'itsna-karma-kr'it. Akarma,* cessation from action is not the way ; the man who has attained to the insight of the highest reason, perceives that such inaction is itself a constant action, a state subject to the workings of Nature and her qualities. The mind that takes refuge in physical inactivity, is still under the delusion that it and not Nature is the doer of works ; it has mistaken inertia for liberation ; it does not see that even in what seems absolute inertia greater than that of the stone or clod, Nature is at work, keeps unimpaired her hold. On the contrary in the full flood of action the soul is free from its works, is not the doer, not bound by what is done, and he who lives in the freedom of the soul, not in the bondage of the modes of Nature, alone has release from works. This is what the Gita clearly means when it says that he who in action can see inaction and can see action still continuing in cessation from works, is the man of true reason and discernment among men. This saying hinges upon the Sankhya distinction between Purusha and Prakriti, between the free inactive soul, eternally calm, pure and unmoved in the midst of works, and ever active Nature operative as much in inertia and cessation as in the overt turmoil of her visible hurry of labour. This is the knowledge which the highest effort of the discriminating reason, the *buddhi,* gives to us, and therefore whoever possesses it is the truly rational and discerning man, *sa*

buddhimân manushyeshu,—not the perplexed thinker who judges life and works by the external, uncertain and impermanent distinctions of the lower reason. Therefore the liberated man is not afraid of action, he is a large and universal doer of all works, *kr'itsna-karma-kr'it ;* not as others do them in subjection to Nature, but poised in the silent calm of the soul, tranquilly in Yoga with the Divine. The Divine is the lord of his works, he is only their channel through the instrumentality of his nature conscious of and subject to her Lord. By the flaming intensity and purity of this knowledge all his works are burned up as in a fire and his mind remains without any stain or disfiguring mark from them, calm, silent, unperturbed, white and clean and pure. To do all in this liberating knowledge, without the personal egoism of the doer, is the first sign of the divine worker.

The second sign is freedom from desire ; for where there is not the personal egoism of the doer, desire becomes impossible ; it is starved out, sinks for want of a support, dies of inanition. Outwardly the liberated man seems to undertake works of all kinds like other men, on a larger scale perhaps with a more powerful will and driving-force, for the might of the divine will works in his active nature ; but from all his inceptions and undertakings the inferior concept and nether will of desire is entirely banished, *sarve samârambhâh kâmasankalpavarjitâh.* He has abandoned all attachment to the fruits of

his works, and where one does not work for the fruit, but solely as an impersonal instrument of the Master of works, desire can find no place,—not even the desire to serve successfully, for the fruit is the Lord's and determined by him and not by the personal will and effort, or to serve with credit and to the Master's satisfaction, for the real doer is the Lord himself and all glory belongs to a form of his Shakti missioned in the nature and not to the limited human personality. The human mind and soul of the liberated man does nothing, *na kinchit karoti ;* even though through his nature he engages in action, it is the Nature, the executive Shakti, it is the conscious Goddess governed by the divine Inhabitant who does the work.

It does not follow that the work is not to be done perfectly, with success, with a right adaptation of means to ends: on the contrary a perfect working is easier to action done tranquilly in Yoga than to action done in the blindness of hopes and fears, lamed by the judgments of the stumbling reason, running about amidst the eager trepidations of the hasty human will: Yoga, says the Gita elsewhere, is the true skill in works, *yogah karmasu kauçalam.* But all this is done impersonally by the action of a great universal light and power operating through the individual nature. The Karmayogin knows that the power given to him will be adapted to the fruit decreed, the divine thought behind the work equated with the work he has to do, the will in him—which will not be wish or desire, but an

impersonal drive of conscious power directed towards an aim not his own,—subtly regulated in its energy and direction by the divine wisdom. The result may be success, as the ordinary mind understands it, or it may seem to that mind to be defeat and failure; but to him it is always the success intended, not by him, but by the all-wise manipulator of action and result, because he does not seek for victory, but only for the fulfilment of the divine will and wisdom which works out its ends through apparent failure as well as and often with greater force than through apparent triumph. Arjuna, bidden to fight, is assured of victory; but even if certain defeat were before him, he must still fight because that is the present work assigned to him as his immediate share in the great sum of energies by which the divine will is surely accomplished.

The liberated man has no personal hopes; he does not seize on things as his personal possessions; he receives what the divine Will brings him, covets nothing, is jealous of none: what comes to him he takes without repulsion and without attachment: what goes from him he allows to depart into the whirl of things without repining or grief or sense of loss. His heart and self are under perfect control; they are free from reaction and passion, they make no turbulent response to the touches of outward things. His action is indeed a purely physical action, *çârîram kevalam karma;* for all else comes from above, is not generated on the human

plane, is only a reflection of the will, knowledge, joy of the divine Purushottama. Therefore he does not by a stress on doing and its objects bring about in his mind and heart any of those reactions which we call passion and sin. For sin consists not at all in the outward deed, but in an impure reaction of the personal will, mind and heart which accompanies it or causes it; the impersonal, the spiritual is always pure, *apâpaviddham,* and gives to all that it does its own inalienable purity. This spiritual impersonality is a third sign of the divine worker. All human souls, indeed, who have attained to a certain greatness and largeness are conscious of an impersonal Force or Love or Will and Knowledge working through them, but they are not free from egoistic reactions, sometimes violent enough, of their human personality. But this freedom the liberated soul has attained; for he has cast his personality into the impersonal, where it is no longer his, but is taken up by the divine Person, the Purushottama, who uses all finite qualities infinitely and freely and is bound by none. He has become a soul and ceased to be a sum of natural qualities; and such appearance of personality as remain for the operations of Nature, is something unbound, large, flexible, universal; it is a free mould for the Infinite, it is a living mask of the Purushottama.

The result of this knowledge, this desirelessness and this impersonality is a perfect equality in the soul and the nature. Equality is the fourth

sign of the divine worker. He has, says the Gita, passed beyond the dualities; he is *dwandwátîṭa*. We have seen that he regards with equal eyes, without any disturbance of feeling, failure and success, victory and defeat; but not only these, all dualities are in him surpassed and reconciled. The outward distinctions by which men determine their psychological attitude towards the happenings of the world, have for him only a subordinate and instrumental meaning. He does not ignore them, but he is above them. Good happening and evil happening, so all-important to the human soul subject to desire, are to the desireless divine soul equally welcome since by their mingled strand are worked out the developing forms of the eternal good. He cannot be defeated, since all for him is moving towards the divine victory in the Kurukshetra of Nature, *dharmakshetre kurukshetre*, the field of doings which is the field of the evolving Dharma, and every turn of the conflict has been designed and mapped by the foreseeing eye of the Master of the battle, the Lord of works and Guide of the dharma. Honour and dishonour from men cannot move him, nor their praise nor their blame: for he has a greater clear-seeing judge and another standard for his action, and his motive admits no dependence upon worldly rewards. Arjuna the Kshatriya prizes naturally honour and reputation and is right in shunning disgrace and the name of coward as worse than death; for to maintain the point of honour and the standard of courage in

the world is part of his dharma: but Arjuna the liberated soul need care for none of these things, he has only to know the *kartavyam karma*, the work which the supreme Self demands from him, and to do that and leave the result to the Lord of his actions. He has passed even beyond that distinction of sin and virtue which is so all-important to the human soul while it is struggling to minimise the hold of its egoism and lighten the heavy and violent yoke of its passions,—the liberated has risen above these struggles and is seated firmly in the purity of the witnessing and enlightened soul. Sin has fallen away from him, and not a virtue acquired and increased by good action and impaired or lost by evil action, but the inalienable and unalterable purity of a divine and selfless nature is the peak to which he has climbed and the seat upon which he is founded. There the sense of sin and the sense of virtue have no starting-point or applicability.

Arjuna, still in the ignorance, may feel in his heart the call of right and justice and may argue in his mind that abstention from battle would be a sin entailing responsibility for all the suffering that injustice and oppression and the evil karma of the triumph of wrong bring upon men and nations, or he may feel in his heart the recoil from violence and slaughter and argue in his mind that all shedding of blood is a sin which nothing can justify. Both of these attitudes would appeal with equal right to virtue and reason and it would depend upon the man, the circumstances and the time which of these

might prevail in his mind or before the eyes of the world. Or he might simply feel constrained by his heart and his honour to support his friends against his enemies, the cause of the good and just against the cause of the evil and oppressive. The liberated soul looks beyond these conflicting standards; he sees simply what the supreme Self demands from him as needful for the maintenance or for the bringing forward of the evolving Dharma. He has no personal ends to serve, no personal loves and hatreds to satisfy, no rigidly fixed standard of action which opposes its rock-line to the flexible advancing march of the progress of the human race or stands up defiant against the call of the Infinite. He has no personal enemies to be conquered or slain, but sees only men who have been brought up against him by circumstances and the will in things to help by their opposition the march of destiny. Against them he can have no wrath or hatred; for wrath and hatred are foreign to the divine nature. The Asura's desire to break and slay what opposes him, the Rakshasa's grim lust of slaughter are impossible to his calm and peace and his all-embracing sympathy and understanding. He has no wish to injure, but on the contrary a universal friendliness and compassion, *maitrah karuna eva cha:* but this compassion is that of a divine soul overlooking men, embracing all other souls in himself, not the shrinking of the heart and the nerves and the flesh which is the ordinary human form of pity: nor does he attach a supreme importance to the life of

the body, but looks beyond to the life of the soul and attaches to the other only an instrumental value. He will not hasten to slaughter and strife, but if war comes in the wave of the Dharma, he will accept it with a large equality and a perfect understanding and sympathy for those whose power and pleasure of domination he has to break and whose joy of triumphant life he has to destroy.

For in all he sees two things, the Divine inhabiting every being equally, the varying manifestation unequal only in its temporary circumstances. In the animal and man, in the dog, the unclean outcast and the learned and virtuous Brahmin, in the saint and the sinner, in the indifferent and the friendly and the hostile, in those who love him and benefit and those who hate him and afflict, he sees himself, he sees God and has at heart for all the same equal kindliness, the same divine affection. Circumstances may determine the outward clasp or the outward conflict, but can never affect his equal eye, his open heart, his inner embrace of all. And in all his actions there will be the same principle of soul, a perfect equality, and the same principle of work, the will of the Divine in him active for the need of the race in its gradually developing advance towards the Godhead.

Again, the sign of the divine worker is that which is central to the divine consciousness itself, a perfect inner joy and peace which depends upon nothing in the world for its source or its

continuance ; it is innate, it is the very stuff of the soul's consciousness, it is the very nature of divine being. The ordinary man depends upon outward things for his happiness ; therefore he has desire ; therefore he has anger and passion, pleasure and pain, joy and grief ; therefore he measures all things in the balance of good fortune and evil fortune. None of these things can affect the divine soul ; it is ever satisfied without any kind of dependence, *nitya-tripto nirâçrayah ;* for its delight, its divine ease, its happiness, its glad light are eternal within, ingrained in itself, *âtma-ratih, antah-sukho 'ntarârâmas tathântar-jyotir eva cha.* What joy it takes in outward things is not for their sake, not for things which it seeks in them and can miss, but for the self in them, for their expression of the Divine, for that which is eternal in them and which it cannot miss. It is without attachment to their outward touches, but finds everywhere the same joy that it finds in itself, because its self is theirs, has become one self with the self of all beings, because it is united with the one and equal Brahman in them through all their differences, *brahmayogayuktâtmâ sarvabhûtâtma-bhûtâtmâ.* It does not rejoice in the touches of the pleasant or feel anguish in the touches of the unpleasant ; neither the wounds of things, nor the wounds of friends, nor the wounds of enemies can disturb the firmness of its outgazing mind or bewilder its receiving heart ; this soul is in its nature, as the Upanishad puts it, *avran'am,* without wound or scar. In all things it

has the same imperishable Ananda, *sukham akshayam açnute.*

That equality, impersonality, peace, joy, freedom do not depend on so outward a thing as doing or not doing works. The Gita insists repeatedly on the difference between the inward and the outward renunciation, *tyâga* and *sannyâsa.* The latter, it says, is valueless without the former, hardly possible even to attain without it, and unnecessary when there is the inward freedom. In fact *tyâga* itself is the real and sufficient Sannyasa. "He should be known as the eternal Sannyasin who neither hates nor desires; free from the dualities he is happily and easily released from all bondage." The painful process of outward Sannyasa, *duhkham âptum,* is an unnecessary process. It is perfectly true that all actions, as well as the fruit of action, have to be given up, to be renounced, but inwardly, not outwardly, not into the inertia of Nature, but to the Lord in sacrifice, into the calm and joy of the Impersonal from whom all action proceeds without disturbing his peace. The true Sannyasa of action is the reposing of all works on the Brahman. "He who, having abandoned attachment, acts reposing (or founding) his works on the Brahman, *brahmanyâdhâya karmâni,* is not stained by sin even as water clings not to the lotus-leaf." Therefore the Yogins first "do works with the body, mind, understanding, or even merely with the organs of action, abandoning attachment, for self-purification, *sangam tyaktwâtmaçuddhaye.* By abandoning attachment

to the fruits of works the soul in union with Brahman attains to peace of rapt foundation in Brahman, but the soul not in union is attached to the fruit and bound by the action of desire." The foundation, the purity, the peace once attained, the embodied soul perfectly controlling its nature, having renounced all its actions by the mind, inwardly, not outwardly, "sits in its nine-gated city neither doing nor causing to be done." For this soul is the one impersonal Soul in all, the all-pervading Lord, *prabhu, vibhu,* who, as the impersonal, neither creates the works of the world, nor the mind's idea of being the doer, *na kartr'itwam na karmâni,* nor the coupling of works to their fruits, the chain of cause and effect. All that is worked out by the Nature in the man, *swabhâva,* his principle of self-becoming, as the word literally means. The all-pervading Impersonal accepts neither the sin nor the virtue of any: these are things created by the ignorance in the creature, by his egoism of the doer, by his ignorance of his highest self, by his involution in the operations of Nature, and when the self-knowledge within him is released from this dark envelope, that knowledge lights up like a sun the real self within him; he knows himself then to be the soul supreme above the instruments of Nature. Pure, infinite, inviolable, immutable, he is no longer affected; no longer does he imagine himself to be modified by her workings. By complete identification with

the Impersonal he can, too, release himself from the necessity of returning by birth into her movement.

And yet this liberation does not at all prevent him from acting. Only, he knows that it is not he who is active, but the modes, the qualities of Nature, her triple *gunas*. "The man who knows the principles of things thinks, his mind in Yoga (with the inactive Impersonal), 'I am doing nothing'; when he sees, hears, tastes, smells, eats, moves, sleeps, breathes, speaks, takes, ejects, opens his eyes or closes them, he holds that it is only the senses acting upon the objects of the senses." He himself, safe in the immutable, unmodified soul, is beyond the grip of the three gunas, *trigunâtîta;* he is neither sattwic, rajasic nor tamasic; he sees with a clear untroubled spirit the alternations of the natural modes and qualities in his action, their rhythmic play of light and happiness, activity and force, rest and inertia. This superiority of the calm soul observing its action but not involved in it, this *traigunâtîtya,* is also a high sign of the divine worker. By itself the idea might lead to a doctrine of the mechanical determinism of Nature and the perfect aloofness and irresponsibility of the soul; but the Gita effectively avoids this fault of an insufficient thought by its illumining supertheistic idea of the Purushottama. It makes it clear that it is not in the end Nature which mechanically determines its own action; it is the will of the Supreme which inspires her; he who has already slain the Dhritarashtrians, he of whom Arjuna is only the

human instrument, a universal Soul, a transcendent Godhead is the master of her labour. The reposing of works in the Impersonal is a means of getting rid of the personal egoism of the doer, but the end is to give up all our actions to that great Lord of all, *sarva-bhûta-maheshwara.* "With a consciousness identified with the Self, renouncing all thy actions into Me, *mayi sarvâni karmâni sannyasyâdhyâtma-chetasâ,* freed from personal hopes and desires, from the thought of 'I' and 'mine', delivered from the fever of the soul, fight," work, do my will in the world. The Divine motives, inspires, determines the entire action ; the human soul impersonal in the Brahman is the pure and silent channel of his power ; that power in the Nature executes the divine movement. Such only are the works of the liberated soul, *muktasya karma,* for in nothing does he act from a personal inception ; such are the actions of the accomplished Karmayogin. They rise from a free spirit and disappear without modifying it, like waves that rise and disappear on the surface of conscious, immutable depths. *Gata-sangasya muktasya jnânâvasthita-chetasah, yajnâyâcharatah karma samagram pravilîyate.*

XIX

EQUALITY

SINCE knowledge, desirelessness, impersonality, equality, the inner self-existent peace and bliss, freedom from or at least superiority to the tangled interlocking of the three modes of Nature are the signs of the liberated soul, they must accompany it in all its activities. They are the condition of that unalterable calm which this soul preserves in all the movement, all the shock, all the clash of forces which surround it in the world. That calm reflects the equable immutability of the Brahman in the midst of all mutations, and it belongs to the indivisible and impartial Oneness which is for ever immanent in all the multiplicities of the universe. For an equal and all-equalising spirit is that Oneness in the midst of the million differences and inequalities of the world ; and equality of the spirit is the sole real equality. For in all else in existence there can only be similarity, adjustment and balance ; but even in the greatest similarities of the world we find difference of inequality and difference of unlikeness and the adjusted balancings of the world can only come about by a poising of combined unequal weights.

Hence the immense importance attached by

the Gita in its elements of Karmayoga to equality; it is the nodus of the free spirit's free relations with the world. Self-knowledge, desirelessness, impersonality, bliss, freedom from the modes of Nature, when withdrawn into themselves, self-absorbed, inactive, have no need of equality; for they take no cognisance of the things in which the opposition of equality and inequality arises. But the moment the spirit takes cognisance of and deals with the multiplicities, personalities, differences, inequalities of the action of Nature, it has to effectuate these other signs of its free status by this one manifesting sign of equality. Knowledge is the consciousness of unity with the One; and in relation with the many different beings and existences of the universe it must show itself by an equal oneness with all. Impersonality is the one immutable spirit's superiority to the variations of its multiple personality in the world; in its dealings with the personalities of the universe it must show itself in the equal and impartial spirit of its action with regard to all, however various that action may be made by the variety of relations into which it is moulded or of the conditions under which it has to take place. So Krishna in the Gita says that none is dear to him, none hated, to all he is equal in spirit; yet is the God-lover the special receiver of his grace, because the relation he has created is different and the one impartial Lord of all yet meets each soul according to its way of approach to him. Desirelessness is the illimitable Spirit's

superiority to the limiting attraction of the separate objects of desire in the world ; when it has to enter into relations with those objects, it must show it either by an equal and impartial indifference in their possession or by an equal and impartial unattached delight in all and love for all which, because it is self-existent, does not depend upon possession or non-possession, but is in its essence unperturbed and immutable. For the spirit's bliss is in itself, and if this bliss is to enter into relations with things and creatures, it is only in this way that it can manifest its free spirituality. *Traigunâtîtya,* transcendence of the gunas, is the unperturbed spirit's superiority to that flux of action of the modes of Nature which is in its constant character perturbed and unequal ; if it has to enter into relations with the conflicting and unequal activities of Nature, if the free soul is to allow its nature any action at all, it must show its superiority by an impartial equality towards all activities, results or happenings.

Equality is the sign and also for the aspirant the test. Where there is inequality in the soul, there there is in evidence some unequal play of the modes of Nature, motion of desire, play of personal will, feeling and action, activity of joy and grief or that disturbed and disturbing delight which is not true spiritual bliss but a mental satisfaction bringing in its train inevitably a counterpart or recoil of mental dissatisfaction. Where there is inequality of soul, there there is deviation from

knowledge, loss of steadfast abiding in the all-embracing and all-reconciling oneness of the Brahman and unity of things. By his equality the Karmayogin knows in the midst of his action that he is free.

It is the spiritual nature of the equality enjoined, high and universal in its character and comprehension, which gives its distinctive note to the teaching of the Gita in this matter. For otherwise the mere teaching of equality in itself as the most desirable status of the mind, feelings and temperament in which we rise superior to human weakness, is by no means peculiar to the Gita. Equality has always been held up to admiration as the philosophic ideal and the characteristic temperament of the sages. The Gita takes up indeed this philosophic ideal, but carries it far beyond into a higher region where we find ourselves breathing a larger and purer air. The Stoic poise, the philosophic poise of the soul are only its first and second steps of ascension out of the whirl of the passions and the tossings of desire to a serenity and bliss, not of the Gods, but of the Divine himself in his supreme self-mastery. The Stoic equality, making character its pivot, founds itself upon self-mastery by austere endurance ; the happier and serener philosophic equality prefers self-mastery by knowledge, by detachment, by a high intellectual indifference seated above the disturbances to which our nature is prone, *udâsînavad âsînah,* as the Gita expresses it ; there

is also the religious or Christian equality which is a perpetual kneeling or a prostrate resignation and submission to the will of God. These are the three steps and means towards divine peace, heroic endurance, sage indifference, pious resignation, *titikshâ, udâsînatâ, namas* or *nati*. The Gita takes them all in its large synthetic manner and weaves them into its upward soul-movement, but it gives to each a profounder root, a larger outlook, a more universal and transcendent significance. For to each it gives the values of the spirit, its power of spiritual being beyond the strain of character, beyond the difficult poise of the understanding, beyond the stress of the emotions.

The ordinary human soul takes a pleasure in the customary disturbances of its nature-life ; it is because it has this pleasure and because, having it, it gives a sanction to the troubled play of the lower nature that the play continues perpetually ; for the Prakriti does nothing except for the pleasure and with the sanction of its lover and enjoyer, the Purusha. We do not recognise this truth because under the actual stroke of the adverse disturbance, smitten by grief, pain, discomfort, misfortune, failure, defeat, blame, dishonour, the mind shrinks back from the blow, while it leaps eagerly to the embrace of the opposite and pleasurable disturbances, joy, pleasure, satisfactions of all kinds, prosperity, success, victory, glory, praise ; but this does not alter the truth of the soul's pleasure in life which remains constant behind the dualities of

the mind. The warrior does not feel physical pleasure in his wounds or find mental satisfaction in his defeats ; but he has a complete delight in the godhead of battle which brings to him defeat and wounds as well as the joy of victory, and he accepts the chances of the former and the hope of the latter as part of the mingled weft of war, the thing which the delight in him pursues. Even, wounds bring him a joy and pride in memory, complete when the pain of them has passed, but often enough present even while it is there and actually fed by the pain. Defeat keeps for him the joy and pride of indomitable resistance to a superior adversary, or, if he is of a baser kind, the passions of hatred and revenge which also have their darker and crueller pleasures. So it is with the pleasure of the soul in the normal play of our life.

The mind recoils by pain and dislike from the adverse strokes of life ; that is Nature's device for enforcing a principle of self-protection, *jugupsâ,* so that the vulnerable nervous and bodily parts of us may not unduly rush upon self-destruction to embrace it: it takes joy in the favourable touches of life ; that is Nature's lure of rajasic pleasure, so that the force in the creature may overcome the tamasic tendencies of inertia and inactivity and be impelled fully towards action, desire, struggle, success, and by its attachment to these things her ends may be worked out. Our secret soul takes a pleasure in this strife and effort, and even a pleasure in adversity and suffering, which can be

complete enough in memory and retrospect, but is present too behind at the time and often even rises to the surface of the afflicted mind to support it in its passion ; but what really attracts the soul is the whole mingled weft of the thing we call life with all its disturbance of struggle and seeking, its attractions and repulsions, its offer and its menace, its varieties of every kind. To the rajasic desire-soul in us a monotonous pleasure, success without struggle, joy without a shadow must after a time become fatiguing, insipid, cloying ; it needs a background of darkness to give full value to its enjoyment of light: for the happiness it seeks and enjoys is of that very nature, it is in its very essence relative and dependent on the perception and experience of its opposite. The joy of the soul in the dualities is the secret of the mind's pleasure in living.

Ask it to rise out of all this disturbance to the unmingled joy of the pure bliss-soul which all the time secretly supports its strength in the struggle and makes its own continued existence possible,— it will draw back at once from the call. It does not believe in such an existence ; or it believes that it would not be life, that it would not be at all the varied existence in the world around it in which it is accustomed to take pleasure ; it would be something tasteless and without savour. Or it feels that the effort would be too difficult for it ; it recoils from the struggle of the ascent, although in reality the spiritual change is not at all more difficult than

the realisation of the dreams the desire-soul pursues, nor entails more struggle and labour in the attainment than the tremendous effort which the desire-soul expends in its passionate chase after its own transient objects of pleasure and desire. The true cause of its unwillingness is that it is asked to rise above its own atmosphere and breathe a rarer and purer air of life, whose bliss and power it cannot realise and hardly even conceives as real, while the joy of this lower turbid nature is to it the one thing familiar and palpable. Nor is this lower satisfaction in itself a thing evil and unprofitable; it is rather the condition for the upward evolution of our human nature out of the tamasic ignorance and inertia to which its material being is most subject; it is the rajasic stage of the graded ascent of man towards the supreme self-knowledge, power and bliss. But if we rest eternally on this plane, the *madhyamâ gatih* of the Gita, our ascent remains unfinished, the evolution of the soul incomplete. Through the sattwic being and nature to that which is beyond the three gunas lies the way of the soul to its perfection.

The movement which will lead us out of the disturbances of the lower nature must be necessarily a movement towards equality in the mind, in the emotional temperament, in the soul. But it is to be noted that, although in the end we must arrive at a superiority to all the three gunas of the lower nature, it is yet in its incipience by a resort to one or other of the three that the movement must begin.

The beginning of equality may be sattwic, rajasic or tamasic; for there is a possibility in the human nature of a tamasic equality. It may be purely tamasic, the heavy equability of a vital temperament rendered inertly irresponsive to the shocks of existence by a sort of dull insensibility undesirous of the joy of life. Or it may result from a weariness of the emotions and desires accumulated by a surfeit and satiety of the pleasure or else, on the contrary, a disappointment and a disgust and shrinking from the pain of life, a lassitude, a fear and horror and dislike of the world: it is then in its nature a mixed movement, rajaso-tamasic, but the lower quality predominates. Or, approaching the sattwic principle, it may aid itself by the intellectual perception that the desires of life cannot be satisfied, that the soul is too weak to master life, that the whole thing is nothing but sorrow and transient effort and nowhere in it is there any real truth or sanity or light or happiness; this is the sattwo-tamasic principle of equality and is not so much equality, though it may lead to that, as indifference or equal refusal. Essentially, the movement of tamasic equality is a generalisation of Nature's principle of *jugupsâ* or self-protecting recoil extended from the shunning of particular painful effects to a shunning of the whole life of Nature itself as in sum leading to pain and self-tormenting and not to the delight which the soul demands.

In tamasic equality by itself there is no real

liberation ; but it can be made a powerful starting-point, if, as in Indian asceticism, it is turned into the sattwic by the perception of the greater existence, the truer power, the higher delight of the immutable Self above Nature. The natural turn of such a movement, however, is towards Sannyasa, the renunciation of life and works, rather than to that union of inner renunciation of desire with continued activity in the world of Nature which the Gita advocates. The Gita, however, admits and makes room for this movement ; it allows as a recoiling starting-point the perception of the defects of the world-existence, birth and disease and death and old age and sorrow, the historic starting-point of the Buddha, *janma-mrityu-jarâ-vyâdhi-duhkha-doshânudarshanam,* and it accepts the effort of those whose self-discipline is motived by a desire for release, even in this spirit, from the curse of age and death, *jarâ-marana-mokshâya mâm âçritya yatanti ye.* But that, to be of any profit, must be accompanied by the sattwic perception of a higher state and the taking delight and refuge in the existence of the Divine, *mâm âçritya.* Then the soul by its recoil comes to a greater condition of being, lifted beyond the three gunas and free from birth and death and age and grief, and enjoys the immortality of its self-existence, *janma-mrityu-jarâ-duhkhair vimukto 'mritam açnute.* The tamasic unwillingness to accept the pain and effort of life is indeed by itself a weakening and degrading thing, and in this lies the danger of preaching to

all alike the gospel of asceticism and world-disgust, that it puts the stamp of a tamasic weakness and shrinking on unfit souls, confuses their understanding, *buddhi-bhedam janayet,* diminishes the sustained aspiration, the confidence in living, the power of effort which the soul of man needs for its salutary, its necessary rajasic struggle to master its environment, without really opening to it—for it is yet incapable of that—a higher goal, a greater endeavour, a mightier victory. But in souls that are fit this tamasic recoil may serve a useful spiritual purpose by slaying their rajasic attraction, their eager preoccupation with the lower life which prevents the sattwic awakening to a higher possibility. Seeking then for a refuge in the void they have created, they are able to hear the divine call, "O soul that findest thyself in this transient and unhappy world, turn and put thy delight in Me," *anityam asukham lokam imam prâpya bhajaswa mâm.*

Still, in this movement, the equality consists only in an equal recoil from all that constitutes the world ; and it arrives at indifference and aloofness, but does not include that power to accept equally all the touches of the world pleasurable or painful without attachment or disturbance which is a necessary element in the discipline of the Gita. Therefore, even if we begin with the tamasic recoil, —which is not at all necessary,—it can only be as a first incitement to a greater endeavour, not as a permanent pessimism. The real discipline begins

with the movement to mastery over these things from which we were first inclined merely to flee. It is here that the possibility of a kind of rajasic equality comes in, which is at its lowest the strong nature's pride in self-mastery, self-control, superiority to passion and weakness; but the Stoic ideal seizes upon this point of departure and makes it the key to an entire liberation of the soul from subjection to all weakness of its lower nature. As the tamasic inward recoil is a generalisation of Nature's principle of *jugupsâ* or self-protection from suffering, so the rajasic upward movement is a generalisation of Nature's other principle of the acceptance of struggle and effort and the innate impulse of life towards mastery and victory; but it transfers the battle to the field where alone complete victory is possible. Instead of a struggle for scattered outward aims and transient successes, it proposes nothing less than the conquest of Nature and the world itself by a spiritual struggle and an inner victory. The tamasic recoil turns from both the pains and pleasures of the world to flee from them; the rajasic movement turns upon them to bear, master and rise superior to them. The Stoic self-discipline calls desire and passion into its embrace of the wrestler and crushes them between its arms, as did old Dhritarashtra in the epic the iron image of Bhima. It endures the shock of things painful and pleasurable, the causes of the physical and mental affections of the nature, and breaks their effects to pieces; it is complete when the soul

can bear all touches without being pained or attracted, excited or troubled. It seeks to make man the conqueror and king of his nature.

The Gita, making its call on the warrior nature of Arjuna, starts with this heroic movement. It calls on him to turn on the great enemy desire and slay it. Its first description of equality is that of the Stoic philosopher. "He whose mind is undisturbed in the midst of sorrows and amid pleasures is free from desire, from whom liking and fear and wrath have passed away, is the sage of settled understanding. Who in all things is without affection though visited by this good or that evil and neither hates nor rejoices, his intelligence sits firmly founded in wisdom." If one abstains from food, it says, giving a physical example, the object of sense ceases to affect, but the affection itself of the sense, the *rasa,* remains ; it is only when, even in the exercise of the sense, it can keep back from seeking its sensuous aim in the object, *artha,* and abandon the affection, the desire for the pleasure of taste, that the highest level of the soul is reached. It is by using the mental organs on the objects, "ranging over them with the senses," *vishayân indriyaiç-charan,* but with senses subject to the self, freed from liking and disliking, that one gets into a large and sweet clearness of soul and temperament in which passion and grief find no place. All desires have to enter into the soul, as waters into the sea, and yet it has to remain immovable, filled but not disturbed : so in the end all desires can be

abandoned. To be freed from wrath and passion and fear, and attraction is repeatedly stressed as a necessary condition of the liberated status, and for this we must learn to bear their shocks, which cannot be done without exposing ourselves to their causes. "He who can bear here in the body the velocity of wrath and desire, is the Yogin, the happy man." *Titikshâ,* the will and power to endure, is the means. "The material touches which cause heat and cold, happiness and pain, things transient which come and go, these learn to endure. For the man whom these do not trouble nor pain, the firm and wise who is equal in pleasure and suffering, makes himself apt for immortality." The equal-souled has to bear suffering and not hate, to receive pleasure and not rejoice. Even the physical affections are to be mastered by endurance and this too is part of the Stoic discipline. Age, death, suffering, pain are not fled from, but accepted and vanquished by a high indifference.* Not to flee appalled from Nature in her lower masks, but to meet and conquer her is the true instinct of the strong nature, *purusharshabha,* the leonine soul among men. Thus compelled, she throws aside her mask and reveals to him his true nature as the free soul, not her subject but her king and lord, *swarât, samrât.*

* *Dhîras tatra na muhyati,* says the Gita; the strong and wise soul is not perplexed, troubled or moved by them. But still they are accepted only to be conquered, *jarâ-marana-mokshâya yatanti.*

But the Gita accepts this Stoic discipline, this heroic philosophy, on the same condition that it accepts the tamasic recoil,—it must have above it the sattwic vision of knowledge, at its root the aim at self-realisation and in its steps the ascent to the divine Nature. A Stoic discipline which merely crushed down the common affections of our human nature,—although less dangerous than a tamasic weariness of life, unfruitful pessimism and sterile inertia, because it would at least increase the power and self-mastery of the soul,—would still be no unmixed good, since it might lead to insensibility and an inhuman isolation without giving the true spiritual release. The Stoic equality is justified as an element in the discipline of the Gita because it can be associated with and can help to the realisation of the free immutable Self in the mobile human being, *param drishtwâ,* and to status in that new self-consciousness, *eshâ brâhmî sthitih.* "Awakening by the understanding to the Highest which is beyond even the discerning mind, put force on the self by the self to make it firm and still, and slay this enemy who is so hard to assail, Desire." Both the tamasic recoil of escape and the rajasic movement of struggle and victory are only justified when they look beyond themselves through the sattwic principle to the self-knowledge which legitimises both the recoil and the struggle.

The pure philosopher, the thinker, the born sage not only relies upon the sattwic principle in him as his ultimate justification, but uses it from

the beginning as his instrument of self-mastery. He starts from the sattwic equality. He too observes the transitoriness of the material and external world and its failure to satisfy the desires or to give the true delight, but this causes in him no grief, fear or disappointment. He observes all with an eye of tranquil discernment and makes his choice without repulsion or perplexity. "The enjoyments born of the touches of things are causes of sorrow, they have a beginning and an end; therefore the sage, the man of awakened understanding, *budhah,* does not place his delight in these." "The self in him is unattached to the touches of external things; he finds his happiness in himself." He sees, as the Gita puts it, that he is himself his own enemy and his own friend, and therefore he takes care not to dethrone himself by casting his being into the hands of desire and passion, *nâtmânam avasâdayet,* but delivers himself out of that imprisonment by his own inner power *uddhared âtmanâtmânam;* for whoever has conquered his lower self, finds in his higher self his best friend and ally. He becomes satisfied with knowledge, master of his senses, a Yogin by sattwic equality,—for equality is Yoga, *samatwam yoga uchyate,*—regarding alike clod and stone and gold, tranquil and self-poised in heat and cold, suffering and happiness, honour and disgrace. He is equal in soul to friend and enemy and to neutral and indifferent, because he sees that these are transitory relations born of the changing conditions of life. Even by the pretensions of

learning and purity and virtue and the claims to superiority which men base upon these things, he is not led away. He is equal-souled to all men, to the sinner and the saint, to the virtuous, learned and cultured Brahmin and the fallen outcaste. All these are the Gita's descriptions of the sattwic equality, and they sum up well enough what is familiar to the world as the calm philosophic equality of the sage.

Where then is the difference between this and the larger equality taught by the Gita? It lies in the difference between the intellectual and philosophic discernment and the spiritual, the Vedantic knowledge of unity on which the Gita founds its teaching. The philosopher maintains his equality by the power of the buddhi, the discerning mind; but even that by itself is a doubtful foundation. For, though master of himself on the whole by a constant attention or an acquired habit of mind, in reality he is not free from his lower nature, and it does actually assert itself in many ways and may at any moment take a violent revenge for its rejection and suppression. For, always, the play of the lower nature is a triple play, and the rajasic and tamasic qualities are ever lying in wait for the sattwic man. "Even the mind of the wise man who labours for perfection is carried away by the vehement insistence of the senses." Perfect security can only be had by resorting to something higher than the sattwic quality, something higher than the

discerning mind, to the Self,—not the philosopher's intelligent self, but the divine sage's spiritual self which is beyond the three gunas. All must be consummated by a divine birth into the higher spiritual nature.

And the philosopher's equality is like the Stoic's, like the world-fleeing ascetic's, inwardly a lonely freedom, remote and aloof from men; but the man born to the divine birth has found the Divine not only in himself, but in all beings. He has realised his unity with all and his equality is therefore full of sympathy and oneness. He sees all as himself and is not intent on his lonely salvation; he even takes upon himself the burden of their happiness and sorrow by which he is not himself affected or subjected. The perfect sage, the Gita more than once repeats, is ever engaged with a large equality in doing good to all creatures and makes that his occupation and delight, *sarvabhûta-hite ratah*. The perfect Yogin is no solitary musing on the Self in his ivory tower of spiritual isolation, but, *yuktah krishna-karma-kr'it*, a many-sided universal worker for the good of the world, for God in the world. For he is a *bhakta*, a lover and devotee of the Divine, as well as a sage and a Yogin, a lover who loves God wherever he finds Him and who finds Him everywhere; and what he loves, he does not disdain to serve, nor does action carry him away from the bliss of union, since all his acts proceed from the One in him and to the One in all they

are directed. The equality of the Gita is a large synthetic equality in which all is lifted up into the integrality of the divine being and the divine nature.

XX

EQUALITY AND KNOWLEDGE

YOGA and knowledge are, in this early part of the Gita's teaching, the two wings of the soul's ascent. By Yoga is meant union through divine works done without desire, with equality of soul to all things and all men, as a sacrifice to the Supreme, while knowledge is that on which this desirelessness, this equality, this power of sacrifice is founded. The two wings indeed assist each other's flight; acting together, yet with a subtle alternation of mutual aid, like the two eyes in a man which see together because they see alternately, they increase one another mutually by interchange of substance. As the works grow more and more desireless, equal-minded, sacrificial in spirit, the knowledge increases; with the increase of the knowledge the soul becomes firmer in the desireless, sacrificial equality of its works. The sacrifice of knowledge, says the Gita therefore, is greater than any material sacrifice. "Even if thou art the greatest doer of sin beyond all sinners, thou shalt cross over all the crookedness of evil in the ship of knowledge. . . There is nothing in the world equal in purity to knowledge." By knowledge desire and its first-born child, sin, are destroyed. The liberated man is able to do works

as a sacrifice because he is freed from attachment through his mind, heart and spirit being firmly founded in self-knowledge, *gata-sangasya jnânâvasthita-chetasah.* All his work disappears completely as soon as done, suffers *laya,* as one might say, in the being of the Brahman, *pravilîyate ;* it has no reactionary consequence on the soul of the apparent doer. The work is done by the Lord through his Nature, it is no longer personal to the human instrument. The work itself becomes but power of the nature and substance of the being of the Brahman.

It is in this sense that the Gita is speaking when it says that all the totality of work finds its completion, culmination, end in knowledge, *sarvam karmâkhilam jnâne parisamâpyate.* "As a fire kindled turns to ashes its fuel, so the fire of knowledge turns all works to ashes." By this it is not at all meant that when knowledge is complete, there is cessation from works. What is meant is made clear by the Gita when it says that he who has destroyed all doubt by knowledge and has by Yoga given up all works and is in possession of the Self is not bound by his works, *yoga-sannyasta-karmânam âtmavantam na karmâni nibadhnanti,* and that he whose self has become the self of all existences, acts and yet is not affected by his works, is not caught in them, receives from them no soul-ensnaring reaction, *kurvann api na lipyate.* Therefore, it says, the Yoga of works is better than the physical renunciation of works, because, while Sannyasa is

difficult for embodied beings who must do works so long as they are in the body, Yoga of works is entirely sufficient and it rapidly and easily brings the soul to Brahman. That Yoga of works is, we have seen, the offering of all action to the Lord, which induces as its culmination an inner and not an outer, a spiritual, not a physical giving up of works into the Brahman, into the being of the Lord, *brahmani âdhâya karmâni, mayi sannyasya.* When works are thus "reposed on the Brahman," the personality of the instrumental doer ceases ; though he acts, he does nothing ; for he has given up not only the fruits of his works, but the works themselves and the doing of them to the Lord. The Divine then takes the burden of works from him ; the Supreme becomes the doer and the act and the result.

This knowledge of which the Gita speaks, is not an intellectual activity of the mind ; it is a luminous growth into the highest state of being by the outshining of the light of the divine sun of Truth, "that Truth, the Sun lying concealed in the darkness" of our ignorance of which the Rigveda speaks, *tat satyam sûryam tamasi kshiyantam.* The immutable Brahman is there in the spirit's skies above this troubled lower nature of the dualities, untouched either by its virtue or by its sin, accepting neither our sense of sin nor our self-righteousness, untouched by its joy and its sorrow, indifferent to our joy in success and our grief in failure, master of all, supreme, all-pervading, *prabhu*

vibhu, calm, strong, pure, equal in all things, the source of Nature, not the direct doer of our works, but the witness of Nature and her works, not imposing on us either the illusion of being the doer, for that illusion is the result of the ignorance of this lower Nature. But this freedom, mastery, purity we cannot see; we are bewildered by the natural ignorance which hides from us the eternal self-knowledge of the Brahman secret within our being. But knowledge comes to its persistent seeker and removes the natural self-ignorance; it shines out like a long-hidden sun and lights up to our vision that self-being supreme beyond the dualities of this lower existence, *âdityavat prakâçayati tat param.* By a long whole-hearted endeavour, by directing our whole conscious being to that, by making that our whole aim, by turning it into the whole object of our discerning mind and so seeing it not only in ourselves but everywhere, we become one thought and self with that, *tad-buddhayo tad-âtmânah,* we are washed clean of all the darkness and suffering of the lower man by the waters of knowledge,* *jnâna-nirdhûta-kalmashâh.*

The result is, says the Gita, a perfect equality to all things and all persons; and then only can we repose our works completely in the Brahman. For the Brahman is equal, *samam Brahma,* and it is

* The Rigveda so speaks of the streams of the Truth, the waters that have perfect knowledge, the waters that are full of the divine sunlight, *r'itasya dhârâh, âpo vichetasah, swarvatîr apah.* What are here metaphors, are there concrete symbols.

only when we have this perfect equality, *sâmye sthitam manah,* "seeing with an equal eye the learned and cultured Brahman, the cow, the elephant, the dog, the outcaste" and knowing all as one Brahman, that we can, living in that oneness, see like the Brahman our works proceeding from the nature freely without any fear of attachment, sin or bondage. Sin and stain then cannot be ; for we have overcome that creation full of desire and its works and reactions which belongs to the ignorance, *tair jitah sargah,* and living in the supreme and divine Nature there is no longer fault or defect in our works ; for these are created by the inequalities of the ignorance. The equal Brahman is faultless, *nirdosham hi samam brahma,* beyond the confusion of good and evil, and living in the Brahman we too rise beyond good and evil ; we act in that purity, stainlessly, with an equal and single purpose of fulfilling the welfare of all existences, *kshîna-kalmashâh sarvabhûta-hite ratâh.* The Lord in our hearts is in the ignorance also the cause of our actions, but through his Maya, through the egoism of our lower nature which creates the tangled web of our actions and brings back upon our egoism the recoil of their tangled reactions affecting us inwardly as sin and virtue, affecting us outwardly as suffering and pleasure, evil fortune and good fortune, the great chain of Karma. When we are freed by knowledge, the Lord, no longer hidden in our hearts, but manifest as our supreme self, takes up our works and uses us as faultless

instruments, *nimitta-mâtram,* for the helping of the world. Such is the intimate union between knowledge and equality; knowledge here in the *buddhi* reflected as equality in the temperament; above, on a higher plane of consciousness, knowledge as the light of thc Being, equality as the stuff of the Nature.

Always in this sense of a supreme self-knowledge is this word *jnâna* used in Indian philosophy and Yoga; it is the light by which we grow into our true being, not the knowledge by which we increase our information and our intellectual riches; it is not scientific or psychological or philosophic or ethical or aesthetic or worldly and practical knowledge. These too no doubt help us to grow, but only in the becoming, not in the being; they enter into the definition of Yogic knowledge only when we use them as aids to know the Supreme, the Self, the Divine,—scientific knowledge, when we can get through the veil of processes and phenomena and see the one Reality behind which explains them all; psychological knowledge, when we use it to know ourselves and to distinguish the lower from the higher, so that this we may renounce and into that we may grow; philosophical knowledge, when we turn it as a light upon the essential principles of existence so as to discover and live in that which is eternal; ethical knowledge, when by it having distinguished sin from virtue we put away the one and rise above the other into the pure innocence of the divine

Nature ; aesthetic knowledge, when we discover by it the beauty of the Divine ; knowledge of the world, when we see through it the way of the Lord with his creatures and use it for the service of the Divine in man. Even then they are only aids ; the real knowledge is that which is a secret to the mind, of which the mind only gets reflections, but which lives in the spirit.

The Gita in describing how we come by this knowledge, says that we get first initiation into it from the men of knowledge who have *seen,* not those who know merely by the intellect, its essential truths ; but the actuality of it comes from within ourselves: "the man who is perfected by Yoga, finds it of himself in the self by the course of Time," it grows within him, that is to say, and he grows into it as he goes on increasing in desirelessness, in equality, in devotion to the Divine. It is only of the supreme knowledge that this can altogether be said ; the knowledge which the intellect of man amasses, is gathered laboriously by the senses and the reason from outside. To get this other knowledge, self-existent, intuitive, self-experiencing, self-revealing, we must have conquered and controlled our mind and senses, *sanyatendriyah,* so that we are no longer subject to their delusions, but rather the mind and senses become its pure mirror ; we must have fixed our whole conscious being on the truth of that supreme reality in which all exists, *tat-parâh,* so that it may display in us its luminous self-existence.

Finally, we must have a faith which no intellectual doubt can be allowed to disturb, *çraddhâvân labhate jnânam.* "The ignorant who has not faith, the soul of doubt goeth to perdition; neither this world, nor the supreme world, nor any happiness is for the soul full of doubts." In fact, it is true that without faith nothing decisive can be achieved either in this world or for possession of the world above, and that it is only by laying hold of some sure basis and positive support that man can attain any measure of terrestrial or celestial success and satisfaction and happiness; the merely sceptical mind loses itself in the void. But still in the lower knowledge doubt and scepticism have their temporary uses; in the higher they are stumblingblocks: for there the whole secret is not the balancing of truth and error, but a constantly progressing realisation of revealed truth. In intellectual knowledge there is always a mixture of falsehood or incompleteness which has to be got rid of by subjecting the truth itself to sceptical inquiry; but in the higher knowledge falsehood cannot enter and that which intellect contributes by attaching itself to this or that opinion, cannot be got rid of by mere questioning, but will fall away of itself by persistence in realisation. Whatever incompleteness there is in the knowledge attained, it must be got rid of, not by questioning in its roots what has already been realised, but by proceeding to further and more complete realisation through a deeper, higher and wider living in the

Spirit. And what is not yet realised must be prepared for by faith, not by sceptical questioning, because this truth is one which the intellect cannot give and which is indeed often quite opposed to the ideas in which the reasoning and logical mind gets entangled: it is not a truth which has to be proved, but a truth which has to be lived inwardly, a greater reality into which we have to grow. Finally, it is in itself a self-existent truth and would be self-evident if it were not for the sorceries of the ignorance in which we live; the doubts, the perplexities which prevent us from accepting and following it, arise from that ignorance, from the sense-bewildered, opinion-perplexed heart and mind, living as they do in a lower and phenomenal truth and therefore questioning the higher realities, *ajnâna-sambhûtam hr'itstham sançayam.* They have to be cut away by the sword of knowledge, says the Gita, by the knowledge that realises, by resorting constantly to Yoga, that is, by living out the union with the Supreme whose truth being known all is known, *yasmin vijnâte sarvam vijnâtam.*

The higher knowledge we there get is that which is to the knower of Brahman his constant vision of things when he lives uninterruptedly in the Brahman, *brahmavid brahmani sthitah.* That is not a vision or knowledge or consciousness of Brahman to the exclusion of all else, but a seeing of all in Brahman and as the self. For, it is said, the knowledge by which we rise beyond all relapse

back into the bewilderment of our mental nature, is "that by which thou shalt see all existences without exception in the Self, then in Me." Elsewhere the Gita puts it more largely, "Equal-visioned everywhere, he sees the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self. He who sees Me everywhere and all and each in Me, is never lost to Me nor I to him. He who has reached oneness and loves Me in all beings, that Yogin, howsoever he lives and acts, is living and acting in Me. O Arjuna, he who sees all equally everywhere as himself, whether it be happiness or suffering, I hold him to be the supreme Yogin." That is the old Vedantic knowledge of the Upanishads which the Gita holds up constantly before us; but it is its superiority to other later formulations of it that it turns persistently this knowledge into a great practical philosophy of divine living. Always it insists on the relation between this knowledge of oneness and Karmayoga, and therefore on the knowledge of oneness as the basis of a liberated action in the world. Whenever it speaks of knowledge, it turns at once to speak of equality which is its result; whenever it speaks of equality, it turns to speak too of the knowledge which is its basis. The equality it enjoins does not begin and end in a static condition of the soul useful only for self-liberation; it is always a basis of works. The peace of the Brahman in the liberated soul is the foundation; the large, free, equal, worldwide action of the Lord in the liberated nature radiates the power

which proceeds from that peace; these two made one synthesise divine works and God-knowledge.

We see at once what a profound extension we get here for the ideas which otherwise the Gita has in common with other systems of philosophic, ethical or religious living. Endurance, philosophic indifference, resignation are, we have said, the foundation of three kinds of equality; but the Gita's truth of knowledge not only gathers them all up together, but gives them an infinitely profound, a magnificently ample significance. The Stoic knowledge is that of the soul's power of self-mastery by fortitude, an equality attained by a struggle with one's nature, maintained by a constant vigilance and control against its natural rebellions: it gives a noble peace, an austere happiness, but not the supreme joy of the liberated self living not by a rule, but in the pure, easy, spontaneous perfection of its divine being, so that "however it may act and live, it acts and lives in the Divine," because here perfection is not only attained but possessed in its own right and has no longer to be maintained by effort, for it has become the very nature of the soul's being. The Gita accepts the endurance and fortitude of our struggle with the lower nature as a preliminary movement; but if a certain mastery comes by our individual strength, the freedom of mastery only comes by our union with God, by a merging or dwelling of the personality in the one divine Person and the loss of the personal will in the divine Will. There is a divine Master of Nature

and her works, above her though inhabiting her, who is our highest being and our universal self; to be one with him is to make ourselves divine. By union with God we enter into a supreme freedom and a supreme mastery. The ideal of the Stoic, the sage who is king because by self-rule he becomes master also of outward conditions, resembles superficially the Vedantic idea of the self-ruler and all-ruler, *swarât samrât;* but it is on a lower plane. The Stoic kingship is maintained by a force put upon self and environment; the entirely liberated kingship of the Yogin exists naturally by the eternal royalty of the divine nature, a union with its unfettered universality, a finally unforced dwelling in its superiority to the instrumental nature through which it acts. His mastery over things is because he has become one soul with all things. To take an image from Roman institutions, the Stoic freedom is that of the *libertus,* the freedman, who is still really a dependent on the power that once held him enslaved; his is a freedom allowed by Nature because he has merited it. The freedom of the Gita is that of the freeman, the true freedom of the birth into the higher nature, self-existent in its divinity. Whatever he does and however he lives, the free soul lives in the Divine; he is the privileged child of the mansion, *bâlavat,* who cannot err or fall because all he is and does is full of the Perfect, the All-blissful, the All-loving, the All-beautiful. The kingdom which he enjoys *râjyam samr'iddham,* is a sweet and happy dominion of which it may

be said, in the pregnant phrase of the Greek thinker, "The kingdom is of the child."

The knowledge of the philosopher is that of the true nature of mundane existence, the transience of outward things, the vanity of the world's differences and distinctions, the superiority of the inner calm, peace, light, self-dependence. It is an equality of philosophic indifference ; it brings a high calm, but not the greater spiritual joy ; it is an isolated freedom, a wisdom like that of the Lucretian sage high in his superiority upon the cliff-top whence he looks down on men tossed still upon the tempestuous waters from which he has escaped,—in the end something after all aloof and ineffective. The Gita admits the philosophic motive of indifference as a preliminary movement ; but the indifference to which it finally arrives, if indeed that inadequate word can be at all applied, has nothing in it of the philosophic aloofness. It is indeed a position as of one seated above, *udâsînavat,* but as the Divine is seated above, having no need at all in the world, yet he does works always and is present everywhere supporting, helping, guiding the labour of creatures. This equality is founded upon oneness with all beings. It brings in what is wanting to the philosophic equality ; for its soul is the soul of peace, but also it is the soul of love. It sees all beings without exception in the Divine, it is one self with the Self of all existences and therefore it is in supreme sympathy with all of them. Without exception, *açeshena,* not only with all that is

good and fair and pleases; nothing and no one, however vile, fallen, criminal, repellent in appearance, can be excluded from this universal, this whole-souled sympathy and spiritual oneness. Here there is no room, not merely for hatred or anger or uncharitableness, but for aloofness, disdain or any petty pride of superiority. A divine compassion for the ignorance of the struggling mind, a divine will to pour forth on it all light and power and happiness there will be, indeed, for the apparent man; but for the divine Soul within him there will be more, there will be adoration and love. For from all, from the thief and the harlot and the outcaste as from the saint and the sage, the Beloved looks forth and cries to us, "This is I." "He who loves Me in all beings,"—what greater word of power for the utmost intensities and profundities of divine and universal love, has been uttered by any philosophy or any religion?

Resignation is the basis of a kind of religious equality, submission to the divine will, a patient bearing of the cross, a submissive forbearance. In the Gita this element takes the more ample form of an entire surrender of the whole being to God. It is not merely a passive submission, but an active self-giving; not only a seeing and an accepting of the divine Will in all things, but a giving up of one's own will to be the instrument of the Master of works, and this not with the lesser idea of being a servant of God, but, eventually at least, of such a complete renunciation both of the consciousness

and the works to him that our being becomes one with his being and the impersonalised nature only an instrument and nothing else. All result good or bad, pleasing or unpleasing, fortunate or unfortunate, is accepted as belonging to the Master of our actions, so that finally not only are grief and suffering borne, but they are banished: a perfect equality of the emotional mind is established. There is no assumption of personal will in the instrument; it is seen that all is already worked out in the omniscient prescience and omnipotent effective power of the universal Divine and that the egoism of men cannot alter the workings of that Will. Therefore, the final attitude is that enjoined on Arjuna in a later chapter, "All has been already done by Me in my divine will and foresight; become only the occasion, O Arjuna," *nimitta-mâtram bhava savyasâchin*. This attitude must lead finally to an absolute union of the personal with the Divine Will and, with the growth of knowledge, bring about a faultless response of the instrument to the divine Power and Knowledge. A perfect, an absolute equality of self-surrender, the mentality a passive channel of the divine Light and Power, the active being a mightily effective instrument for its work in the world, will be the poise of this supreme union of the Transcendent, the universal and the individual.

Equality too there will be with regard to the action of others upon us. Nothing that they can do will alter the inner oneness, love, sympathy which

arises from the perception of the one Self in all, the Divine in all beings. But a resigned forbearance and submission to them and their deeds, a passive non-resistance, will be no necessary part of the action ; it cannot be, since a constant instrumental obedience to the divine and universal Will must mean in the shock of opposite forces that fill the world a conflict with personal wills which seek rather their own egoistic satisfaction. Therefore Arjuna is bidden to resist, to fight, to conquer ; but, to fight without hatred or personal desire or personal enmity or antagonism, since to the liberated soul these feelings are impossible. To act for the *loka-sangraha,* impersonally, for the keeping and leading of the peoples on the path to the divine goal, is a rule which rises necessarily from the oneness of the soul with the Divine, the universal Being, since that is the whole sense and drift of the universal action. Nor does it conflict with our oneness with all beings, even those who present themselves here as opponents and enemies. For the divine goal is their goal also, since it is the secret aim of all, even of those whose outward minds, misled by ignorance and egoism, would wander from the path and resist the impulsion. Resistance and defeat are the best outward service that can be done to them. By this perception the Gita avoids the limiting conclusion which might have been drawn from a doctrine of equality impracticably overriding all relations and of a weakening love without knowledge, while it keeps the one thing essential unimpaired. For the

soul oneness with all, for the heart calm universal love, sympathy, compassion, but for the hands freedom to work out impersonally the good, not of this or that person only without regard to or to the detriment of the divine plan, but the purpose of the creation, the progressing welfare and salvation of men, the total good of all existences.

Oneness with God, oneness with all beings, the realisation of the eternal divine unity everywhere and the drawing onwards of men towards that oneness are the law of life which arises from the teachings of the Gita. There can be none greater, wider, more profound. Liberated oneself, to live in this oneness, to help mankind on the path that leads towards it and meanwhile to do all works for God and help man also to do with joy and acceptance all the works to which he is called, *kr'itsna-karma-kr'it, sarvakarmâni joshayan,* no greater or more liberal rule of divine works can be given. This freedom and this oneness are the secret goal of our human nature and the ultimate will in the existence of the race. It is that to which it must turn for the happiness all mankind is now vainly seeking, when once men lift their eyes and their hearts to see the Divine in them and around, in all and everywhere, *sarveshu, sarvatra,* and learn that it is in him they live, while this lower nature of division is only a prison-wall which they must break down or at best an infant-school which they must outgrow, so that they may become adult in nature and free in spirit. To be made one self with God above and God in

man and God in the world is the sense of liberation and the secret of perfection.

XXI

THE DETERMINISM OF NATURE

WHEN we can live in the higher Self by the unity of works and self-knowledge, we become superior to the method of the lower workings of Prakriti. We are no longer enslaved to Nature and her gunas, but, one with the Ishwara, the master of our nature, we are able to use her without subjection to the chain of Karma, for the purposes of the Divine Will in us; for that is what the greater Self in us is, he is the Lord of her works and unaffected by the troubled stress of her reactions. The soul ignorant in Nature, on the contrary, is enslaved by that ignorance to her modes, because it is identified there, not felicitously with its true self, not with the Divine who is seated above her, but stupidly and unhappily with the ego-mind which is a subordinate factor in her operations in spite of the exaggerated figure it makes, a mere mental knot and point of reference for the play of the natural workings. To break this knot, no longer to make the ego the centre and beneficiary of our works, but to derive all from and refer all to the divine Supersoul is the way to become superior to all the restless trouble of Nature's modes. For it is to live in the supreme consciousness,

of which the ego-mind is a degradation, and to act in an equal and unified Will and Force and not in the unequal play of the gunas which is a broken seeking and striving, a disturbance, an inferior Maya.

The passages in which the Gita lays stress on the subjection of the ego-soul to Nature, have by some been understood as the enunciation of an absolute and a mechanical determinism which leaves no room for any freedom within the cosmic existence. Certainly, the language it uses is emphatic and seems very absolute. But we must take, here as elsewhere, the thought of the Gita as a whole and not force its affirmations in their solitary sense quite detached from each other,—as indeed every truth, however true in itself, yet, taken apart from others which at once limit and complete it, becomes a snare to bind the intellect and a misleading dogma ; for in reality each is one thread of a complex weft and no thread must be taken apart from the weft. Everything in the Gita is even so interwoven and must be understood in its relation to the whole. The Gita itself makes a distinction between those who have not the knowledge of the whole, *akr'itsnavidah,* and are misled by the partial truths of existence, and the Yogin who has the synthetic knowledge of the totality, *kr'itsna-vit.* To see all existence steadily and see it whole and not be misled by its conflicting truths, is the first necessity for the calm and complete wisdom to which the Yogin is called upon to rise. A certain absolute freedom is one

aspect of the soul's relations with Nature at one pole of our complex being; a certain absolute determinism by Nature is the opposite aspect at its opposite pole; and there is also a partial and apparent, therefore an unreal eidolon of liberty which the soul receives by a contorted reflection of these two opposite truths in the developing mentality. It is the latter to which we ordinarily give, more or less inaccurately, the name of free will; but the Gita regards nothing as freedom which is not a complete liberation and mastery.

We have always to keep in mind the two great doctrines which stand behind all the Gita's teachings with regard to the soul and Nature,—the Sankhya truth of the Purusha and Prakriti corrected and completed by the Vedantic truth of the threefold Purusha and the double Prakriti of which the lower form is the Maya of the three gunas and the higher is the divine nature and the true soul-nature. This is the key which reconciles and explains what we might have otherwise to leave as contradictions and inconsistencies. There are, in fact, different planes of our conscious existence, and what is practical truth on one plane ceases to be true, because it assumes a quite different appearance, as soon as we rise to a higher level from which we can see things more in the whole. Recent scientific discovery has shown, that man, animal, plant and even the metal have essentially the same vital reactions and they would, therefore, if each has a certain kind of what for want of a better word we

must call nervous consciousness, possess the same basis of mechanical psychology. Yet if each of these could give its own mental account of what it experiences, we should have four quite different and largely contradictory statements of the same reactions and the same natural principles, because they get, as we rise in the scale of being, a different meaning and value and have to be judged by a different outlook. So it is with the levels of the human soul. What we now call in our ordinary mentality our free will and have a certain limited justification for so calling it, yet appears to the Yogin who has climbed beyond and to whom our night is day and our day night, not free will at all, but a subjection to the modes of Nature. He regards the same facts, but from the higher outlook of the whole knower, *kr'itsna-vit,* while we view it altogether from the more limited mentality of our partial knowledge, *akr'itsnavidah,* which is an ignorance. What we vaunt of as our freedom is to him bondage.

The perception of the ignorance of our assumption of freedom while one is all the time in the meshes of this lower nature, is the view-point at which the Gita arrives and it is in contradiction to this ignorant claim that it affirms the complete subjection of the ego-soul on this plane to the gunas. "While the actions are being entirely done by the modes of Nature," it says, "he whose self is bewildered by egoism thinks that it is his 'I' which is doing them. But one who knows the true principles

of the divisions of the modes and of works, realises that it is the modes which are acting and reacting on each other and is not caught in them by attachment. Those who are bewildered by the modes, not knowers of the whole, let not the knower of the whole disturb in their mental standpoint. Giving up thy works to Me, free from desire and egoism, fight delivered from the fever of thy soul." Here there is the clear distinction between two levels of consciousness, two standpoints of action, that of the soul caught in the web of its egoistic nature and doing works with the idea, but not the reality of free will, under the impulsion of Nature, and that of the soul delivered from its identification with the ego, observing, sanctioning and governing the works of Nature from above her.

We speak of the soul being subject to Nature: but on the other hand the Gita in distinguishing the properties of the soul and Nature affirms that while Nature is the executrix, the soul is always the lord, *Ishwara*. It speaks here of the self being bewildered by egoism, but the real Self to the Vedantin is the divine, eternally free and self-aware. What then is this self that is bewildered by Nature, this soul that is subject to her? The answer is that we are speaking here in the common parlance of our lower or mental view of things; we are speaking of the apparent self, or the apparent soul, not of the real self, not of the true Purusha. It is really the ego which is subject to Nature, inevitably, because it is itself part of Nature, one functioning of her

machinery; but when the self-awareness in the mind-consciousness identifies itself with the ego, it creates the appearance of a lower self, an ego-self. And so too what we think of ordinarily as the soul is really the natural personality, not the true Person, the Purusha, but the desire-soul in us which is a reflection of the consciousness of the Purusha in the workings of Prakriti: it is, in fact, itself only an action of the three modes and therefore a part of Nature. Thus there are, we may say, two souls in us, the apparent or desire-soul, which changes with the mutations of the gunas and is entirely constituted and determined by them, and the free and eternal Purusha not limited by Nature and her gunas. We have two selves, the apparent self, which is only the ego, that mental centre in us which takes up this mutable action of Prakriti, this mutable personality, and which says "I am this personality, I am this natural being who am doing these works," —but the natural being is simply Nature, a composite of the gunas,—and the true self which is, indeed, the upholder, the possessor and the lord of Nature and figured in her, but is not itself the mutable natural personality. The way to be free must then be to get rid of the desires of this desire-soul and the false self-view of this ego. "Having become free from desire and egoism," cries the Teacher, "fight with all the fever of thy soul passed away from thee,"—*nirâshîr nirmamo bhûtwâ.*

This view of our being starts from the Sankhya analysis of the dual principle in our nature, Purusha

and Prakriti. Purusha is inactive, *akartâ ;* Prakriti is active, *kartrî*: Purusha is the being full of the light of consciousness ; Prakriti is the Nature, mechanical, reflecting all her works in the conscious witness, the Purusha. Prakriti works by the inequality of her three modes, gunas, in perpetual collision and intermixture and mutation with each other ; and by her function of ego-mind she gets the Purusha to identify himself with all this working and so creates the sense of active, mutable, temporal personality in the silent eternity of the Self. The impure natural consciousness overclouds the pure soul-consciousness ; the mind forgets the Person in the ego and the personality ; we suffer the discriminating intelligence to be carried away by the sense-mind and its outgoing functions and by the desire of the life and the body. So long as the Purusha sanctions this action, ego and desire and ignorance must govern the natural being.

But if this were all, then the only remedy would be to withdraw altogether the sanction, suffer or compel all our nature by this withdrawal to fall into a motionless equilibrium of the three gunas and so cease from all action. But this is precisely the remedy,—though it is undoubtedly a remedy, one which abolishes, we might say, the patient along with the disease,—which the Gita constantly discourages. Especially, to resort to a tamasic inaction is just what the ignorant will do if this truth is thrust upon them ; the discriminating mind in them will fall into a false division, a false

opposition, *buddhibheda;* their active nature and their intelligence will be divided against each other and produce a disturbance and confusion without true issue, a false and self-deceiving line of action, *mithyâchâra,* or else a mere tamasic inertia, cessation of works, diminution of the will to life and action, not therefore a liberation, but rather a subjection to the lowest of the three gunas, to *tamas,* the principle of ignorance and of inertia. Or else they will not be able to understand at all, they will find fault with this higher teaching, assert against it their present mental experience, their ignorant idea of free will and, yet more confirmed by the plausibility of their logic in their bewilderment and the deception of ego and desire, lose their chance of liberation in a deeper, more obstinate confirmation of the ignorance.

In fact, these higher truths can only be helpful, because there only they are true to experience and can be lived, on a higher and vaster plane of consciousness and being. To view these truths from below is to mis-see, misunderstand and probably to misuse them. It is a higher truth that the distinction of good and evil is indeed a practical fact and law valid for the egoistic human life which is the stage of transition from the animal to the divine, but on a higher plane we rise beyond good and evil, are above their duality even as the Godhead is above it. But the unripe mind, seizing on this truth without rising from the lower consciousness where it is not practically valid, will

simply make it a convenient excuse for indulging its Asuric propensities, denying the distinction between good and evil altogether and falling by self-indulgence deeper into the morass of perdition, *sarva-jnâna-vimûdhân nashtân achetasah.* So too with this truth of the determinism of Nature; it will be mis-seen and misused, as those misuse it who declare that a man is what his nature has made him and cannot do otherwise than as his nature compels him. It is true in a sense, but not in the sense which is attached to it, not in the sense that the ego-self can claim irresponsibility and impunity for itself in its works; for it has will and it has desire and so long as it acts according to its will and desire, even though that be its nature, it must bear the reactions of its Karma. It is in a net, if you will, a snare which may well seem perplexing, illogical, unjust, terrible to its present experience, to its limited self-knowledge, but a snare of its own choice, a net of its own weaving.

The Gita says, indeed, "All existences follow their nature and what shall coercing it avail?" which seems, if we take it by itself, a hopelessly absolute assertion of the omnipotence of Nature over the soul; "even the man of knowledge acts according to his own nature." And on this it founds the injunction to follow faithfully in our action the law of our nature. "Better is one's own law of works, *swadharma,* though in itself faulty than an alien law well wrought out; death in one's own law of being is better, perilous is it to follow an

alien law." What is precisely meant by this *Swadharma* we have to wait to see until we get to the more elaborate disquisition in the closing chapters about Purusha and Prakriti and the gunas ; but certainly it does not mean that we are to follow any impulse, even though evil, which what we call our nature dictates to us. For between these two verses the Gita throws in this further injunction. "In the object of this or that sense liking and disliking are set in ambush ; fall not into their power, for they are the besetters of the soul in its path." And immediately after this, in answer to Arjuna's objection who asks him, if there is no fault in following our Nature, what are we then to say of that in us which drives a man to sin, as if by force, even against his own struggling will, the Teacher replies that this is desire and its companion wrath, children of rajas, the second guna, the principle of passion, and this desire is the soul's great enemy and has to be slain. Abstention from evildoing it declares to be the first condition for liberation, and always it enjoins self-mastery, self-control, *sanyama,* control of the mind, senses, all the lower being.

There is therefore a distinction to be made between what is essential in the nature, its native and inevitable action, which it avails not at all to repress, suppress, coerce, and what is accidental to it, its wanderings, confusions, perversions, over which we must certainly get control. There is a distinction implied too between coercion and sup-

pression, *nigraha,* and control with right use and right guidance, *sanyama.* The former is a violence done to the nature by the will, which in the end depresses the natural powers of the being, *âtmânaṁ avasâdayet ;* the latter is the control of the lower by the higher self, which successfully gives to those powers their right action and their maximum efficiency,—*yogah karmasu kauçalam.* This nature of *sanyama* is made very clear by the Gita in the opening of its sixth chapter, "By the self thou shouldst deliver the self, thou shouldst not depress and cast down the self (whether by self-indulgence or suppression) ; for the self is the friend of the self and the self is the enemy. To the man is his self a friend in whom the (lower) self has been conquered by the (higher) self, but to him who is not in possession of his (higher) self, the (lower) self is as if an enemy and it acts as an enemy." When one has conquered one's self and attained to the calm of a perfect self-mastery and self-possession, then is the supreme self in a man founded and poised even in his outwardly conscious human being, *samâhita.* In other words, to master the lower self by the higher, the natural self by the spiritual is the way of man's perfection and liberation.

Here then is a very great qualification of the determinism of Nature, a precise limitation of its meaning and scope. How the passage from subjection to mastery works out is best seen if we observe the working of the gunas in the scale of Nature from the bottom to the top. At the bottom

are the existences in which the principle of tamas is supreme, the beings who have not yet attained to the light of self-consciousness and are utterly driven by the current of Nature. There is a will even in the atom, but we see clearly enough that it is not free-will, because it is mechanical and the atom does not possess the will, but is possessed by it. Here the *buddhi,* the element of intelligence and will in Prakriti, is actually and plainly what the Sankhya asserts it to be, *jada,* a mechanical, even an inconscient principle in which the light of the conscious Soul has not at all struggled to the surface: the atom is not conscious of an intelligent will; tamas, the inert and ignorant principle, has its grip on it, contains *rajas,* conceals *sattwa* within itself and holds a high holiday of mastery, Nature compelling this form of existence to act with a stupendous force indeed, but as a mechanical instrument, *yantrârûdham mâyayâ.* Next, in the plant the principle of *rajas* has struggled to the surface, with its power of life, with its capacity of the nervous reactions which in us are recognisable as pleasure and suffering, but *sattwa* is quite involved, has not yet emerged to awaken the light of a conscious intelligent will; all is still mechanical, subconscient or half-conscient, tamas stronger than rajas, both gaolers of the imprisoned sattwa.

In the animal, though tamas is still strong, though we may still describe him as belonging to the tamasic creation, *tâmasa sarga,* yet rajas prevails much more against tamas, brings with it its

developed power of life, desire, emotion, passion, pleasure, suffering, while sattwa, emerging, but still dependent on the lower action, contributes to these the first light of the conscious mind, the mechanical sense of ego, conscious memory, a certain kind of thought, especially the wonders of instinct and animal intuition. But as yet the buddhi, the intelligent will, has not developed the full light of consciousness; therefore, no responsibility can be attributed to the animal for its actions. The tiger can be no more blamed for killing and devouring than the atom for its blind movements, the fire for burning and consuming or the storm for its destructions. If it could answer the question, the tiger would indeed say, like man, that it had free will, it would have the egoism of the doer, it would say, "I kill, I devour"; but we can see clearly enough that it is not really the tiger, but Nature in the tiger that kills, it is Nature in the tiger that devours; and if it refrains from killing or devouring, it is from satiety, from fear or from indolence, from another principle of Nature in it, from the action of the guna called tamas. As it was Nature in the animal that killed, so it is Nature in the animal that refrained from killing. Whatever soul is in it, sanctions passively the action of Nature, is as much passive in its passion and activity as in its indolence or inaction. The animal like the atom acts according to the mechanism of its Nature, and not otherwise, *sadriçam cheshtate*

swasyâh prakr'iteh, as if mounted on a machine, *yantrârûdho mâyayâ.*

Well, but in man at least there is another action, a free soul, a free will, a sense of responsibility, a real doer other than Nature, other than the mechanism of Maya? So it seems, because in man there is a conscious intelligent will ; *buddhi* is full of the light of the observing Purusha, who through it, it seems, observes, understands, approves, or disapproves, gives or withholds the sanction, seems indeed at last to begin to be the lord of his nature. Man is not like the tiger or the fire or the storm ; he cannot kill and say as a sufficient justification, "I am acting according to my nature", and he cannot do it, because he has not the nature and not, therefore, the law of action, *swadharma,* of the tiger, storm or fire. He has a conscious intelligent will, a *buddhi,* and to that he must refer his actions. If he does not do so, if he acts blindly according to his impulses and passions, then the law of his being is not rightly worked out, *swadharmah su-anushthitah,* he has not acted according to the full measure of his humanity, but even as might the animal. It is true that the principle of *rajas* or the principle of *tamas* gets hold of his *buddhi* and induces it to justify any and every action he commits or any avoidance of action ; but still the justification or at least the reference to the buddhi must be there either before or after the action is committed. And, besides, in man *sattwa* is awake and acts not only as intelligence and intelligent will, but as a seeking

for light, for right knowledge and right action according to that knowledge, as a sympathetic perception of the existence and claims of others, as an attempt to know the higher law of his own nature, which the sattwic principle in him creates, and to obey it, and as a conception of the greater peace and happiness which virtue, knowledge and sympathy bring in their train. He knows more or less imperfectly that he has to govern his rajasic and tamasic by his sattwic nature and that thither tends the perfection of his normal humanity.

But is the condition of the predominantly sattwic nature freedom and is this will in man a free will? That the Gita from the standpoint of a higher consciousness in which alone is true freedom, denies. The buddhi or conscious intelligent will is still an instrument of Nature and when it acts, even in the most sattwic sense, it is still Nature which acts and the soul which is carried on the wheel by Maya. At any rate at least nine-tenths of our freedom of will is a palpable fiction; that will is created and determined not by its own self-existent action at a given moment, but by our past, our heredity, our training, our environment, the whole tremendous complex thing we call Karma, which is, behind us, the whole past action of Nature on us and the world converging in the individual, determining what he is, determining what his will shall be at a given moment and determining, as far as analysis can see, even its action at that moment. The ego associates itself always with its Karma and it says "I did" and

"I will" and "I suffer", but if it looks at itself and sees how it was made, it is obliged to say of man as of the animal, "Nature did this in me, Nature wills in me", and if it qualifies by saying "my Nature", that only means "Nature as self-determined in this individual creature." It was the strong perception of this aspect of existence which compelled the Buddhists to declare that all is Karma and that there is no self in existence, that the idea of self is only a delusion of the ego-mind. When the ego thinks "I choose and will this virtuous and not that evil action", it is simply associating itself, somewhat like the fly on the wheel, or rather as might a cog or other part of a mechanism if it were conscious, with a predominant wave or a formed current of the sattwic principle by which Nature chooses through the buddhi one type of action in preference to another. Nature forms itself in us and wills in us, the Sankhya would say, for the pleasure of the inactive observing Purusha.

But even if this extreme statement has to be qualified, and we shall see hereafter in what sense, still the freedom of our individual will, if we choose to give it that name, is very relative and almost infinitesimal, so much is it mixed up with other determining elements. Its strongest power does not amount to mastery. It cannot be relied upon to resist the strong wave of circumstance or of other nature which either overbears or modifies or mixes up with it or at the best subtly deceives and circumvents it. Even the most sattwic will is so overborne

or mixed up with or circumvented by the rajasic and tamasic gunas as to be only in part sattwic, and thence arises that sufficiently strong element of self-deception, of a quite involuntary and even innocent make-believe and hiding from oneself which the merciless eye of the psychologist detects even in the best human action. When we think that we are acting quite freely, powers are concealed behind our action which escape the most careful self-introspection ; when we think that we are free from ego, the ego is there, concealed, in the mind of the saint as in that of the sinner. When our eyes are really opened on our action and its springs, we are obliged to say with the Gita *"gunâ guneshu vartante"*, "it was the modes of Nature that were acting upon the modes."

For this reason even a high predominance of the sattwic principle does not constitute freedom. For, as the Gita points out, the sattwa binds, as much as the other gunas, and binds just in the same way, by desire, by ego ; a nobler desire, a purer ego,— but so long as in any form these two hold the being, there is no freedom. The man of virtue, of knowledge, has his ego of the virtuous man, his ego of knowledge, and it is that sattwic ego which he seeks to satisfy ; for his own sake he seeks virtue and knowledge. Only when we cease to satisfy the ego, to think and to will from the ego, the limited "I" in us, then is there a real freedom. In other words, freedom, highest self-mastery begin when above the natural self we see and hold the supreme

Self of which the ego is an obstructing veil and a blinding shadow. And that can only be when we see the one Self in us seated above Nature and make our individual being one with it in being and consciousness and in its individual nature of action only an instrument of a supreme Will, the one Will that is really free. For that we must rise high above the three gunas, become *trigunâtîta ;* for that Self is beyond even the sattwic principle. We have to climb to it through the sattwa, but we attain to it only when we get beyond sattwa ; we reach out to it from the ego, but only reach it by leaving the ego. We are drawn towards it by the highest, most passionate, most stupendous and ecstatic of all desires ; but we can securely live in it only when all desire drops away from us. We have at a certain stage to liberate ourselves even from the desire of our liberation.

XXII

BEYOND THE MODES OF NATURE

So far then extends the determinism of Nature, and what it amounts to is this that the ego from which we act is itself an instrument of the action of Prakriti and cannot therefore be free from the control of Prakriti ; the will of the ego is a will determined by Prakriti, it is a part of the nature as it has been formed in us by the sum of its own past action and self-modification, and by the nature in us so formed and the will in it so formed our present action also is determined. It is said by some that the first initiating action is always free to our choice however much all that follows may be determined by that, and in this power of initiation and its effect on our future lies our responsibility. But where is that first action in Nature which has no determining past behind it, where that present condition of our nature which is not in sum and detail the result of the action of our past nature? We have that impression of a free initial act because we are living at every moment from our present on towards our future and we do not live back constantly from our present into our past, so that what is strongly vivid to our minds is the present and its consequences while we have a much less vivid hold

of our present as entirely the consequence of our past; this latter we are apt to look on as if it were dead and done with. We speak and act as if we were perfectly free in the pure and virgin moment to do what we will with ourselves using an absolute inward independence of choice. But there is no such absolute liberty, our choice has no such independence.

Certainly, the will in us has always to choose between a certain number of possibilities, for that is the way in which Nature always acts; even our passivity, our refusal to will, is itself a choice, itself an act of the will of Nature in us; even in the atom there is a will always at its work. The whole difference is the extent to which we associate our idea of self with the action of the will in Nature; when we so associate ourselves, we think of it as our will and say that it is a free will and that it is we who are acting. And error or not, illusion or not, this idea of our will, of our action is not a thing of no consequence, of no utility; everything in Nature has a consequence and an utility. It is rather that process of our conscious being by which Nature in us becomes more and more aware of and responsive to the presence of the secret Purusha within her and opens by that increase of knowledge to a greater possibility of action; it is by the aid of the ego-idea and the personal will that she raises herself to her own higher possibilities, rises out of the sheer or else the predominant passivity of the tamasic nature into the passion and the struggle of

the rajasic nature and from the passion and the struggle of the rajasic nature to the greater light, happiness and purity of the sattwic nature. The relative self-mastery gained by the natural man over himself is the dominion achieved by the higher possibilities of his nature over its lower possibilities, and this is done in him when he associates his idea of self with the struggle of the higher guna to get the mastery, the predominance over the lower guna. The sense of free will, illusion or not, is a necessary machinery of the action of Nature, necessary for man during his progress, and it would be disastrous for him to lose it before he is ready for a higher truth. If it be said, as it has been said, that Nature deludes man to fulfil her behests and that the idea of a free individual will is the most powerful of these delusions, then it must also be said that the delusion is for his good and without it he could not rise to his full possibilities.

But it is not a sheer delusion, it is only an error of standpoint and an error of placement. The ego thinks that it is the real self and acts as if it were the true centre of action and as if all existed for its sake, and there it commits an error of standpoint and placement. It is not wrong in thinking that there is something or someone within ourselves, within this action of our nature, who is the true centre of its action and for whom all exists ; but this is not the ego, it is the Lord secret within our hearts, the divine Purusha, and the Jiva, other than ego, who is a portion of his being. The self-assertion of ego-

sense is the broken and distorted shadow in our minds of the truth that there is a real Self within us which is the master of all and for whom and at whose behest Nature goes about her works. So too the ego's idea of free will is a distorted and misplaced sense of the truth that there is a free Self within us and that the will in Nature is only a modified and partial reflection of its will, modified and partial because it lives in the successive moments of Time and acts by a constant series of modifications which forget much of their own precedents and are only imperfectly conscious of their own consequences and aims. But the Will within, exceeding the moments of Time, knows all these, and the action of Nature in us is an attempt, we might say, to work out under the difficult conditions of a natural and egoistic ignorance what is foreseen in full supramental light by the inner Will and Knowledge.

But a time must come in our progress when we are ready to open our eyes to the real truth of our being, and then the error of our egoistic free-will must fall away from us. The rejection of the idea of egoistic free-will does not imply a cessation of action, because Nature is the doer and carries out her action after this machinery is dispensed with even as she did before it came into usage in the process of her evolution. In the man who has rejected it, it may even be possible for her to develop a greater action ; for his mind may be more aware of all that his nature is by the self-creation of the past, more aware of the powers that environ and

are working upon it to help or to hinder its growth, more aware too of the latent greater possibilities which it contains by virtue of all in it that is unexpressed, yet capable of expression; and this mind may be a freer channel for the sanction of the Purusha to the greater possibilities that it sees and a freer instrument for the response of Nature, for her resultant attempt at their development and realisation. But the rejection of free-will must not be a mere fatalism or idea of natural determinism in the understanding without any vision of the real Self in us; for then the ego still remains as our sole idea of Self and, as that is always the instrument of Prakriti, we still act by the ego and with our will as her instrument, and the idea in us brings no real change, but only a modification of our intellectual attitude. We shall have accepted the phenomenal truth of the determination of our egoistic being and action by Nature, we shall have seen our subjection: but we shall not have seen the unborn Self within which is above the action of the gunas; we shall not have seen wherein lies our gate of freedom. Nature and ego are not all we are; there is the free soul, the Purusha.

But in what consists this freedom of the Purusha? The Purusha of the current Sankhya philosophy is free in the essence of his being, but because he is the non-doer, *akartâ;* and in so far as he permits Nature to throw on the inactive Soul her shadow of action, he becomes bound phenomenally by the actions of the gunas and cannot

recover his freedom except by dissociation from her and by cessation of her activities. If then a man casts from him the idea of himself as the doer or of the works as his, if, as the Gita enjoins, he fixes himself in the view of himself as the inactive non-doer, *âtmânam akartâram,* and all action as not his own but Nature's, as the play of her gunas, will not a like result follow? The Sankhya Purusha is the giver of the sanction, but a passive sanction only, *anumati,* the work is entirely Nature's ; essentially he is the witness and sustainer, not the governing and active consciousness of the universal Godhead. He is the Soul that sees and accepts, as a spectator accepts the representation of a play he is watching, not the Soul that both governs and watches the play planned by himself and staged in his own being. If then he withdraws the sanction, if he refuses to acknowledge the illusion of doing by which the play continues, he ceases also to be the sustainer and the action comes to a stop, since it is only for the pleasure of the witnessing conscious Soul that Nature performs it and only by his support that she can maintain it. Therefore it is evident that the Gita's conception of the relations of the Purusha and Prakriti are not the Sankhya's, since the same movement leads to a quite different result, in one case to cessation of works, in the other to a great, a selfless and desireless, a divine action. In the Sankhya Soul and Nature are two different entities, in the Gita they are two aspects, two powers of one self-existent being ; the Soul is not only giver of the

sanction, but lord of Nature, Ishwara, through her enjoying the play of the world, through her executing divine will and knowledge in a scheme of things supported by his sanction and existing by his immanent presence, existing in his being, governed by the law of his being and by the conscious will within it. To know, to respond to, to live in the divine being and nature of this Soul is the object of withdrawing from the ego and its action. One rises then above the lower nature of the gunas to the higher divine nature.

The movement by which this ascension is determined results from the complex poise of the Soul in its relations with Nature ; it depends on the Gita's idea of the triple Purusha. The Soul that immediately informs the action, the mutations, the successive becomings of Nature, is the Kshara, that which seems to change with her changes, to move in her motion, the Person who follows in his idea of his being the changes of his personality brought about by the continuous action of her Karma. Nature here is Kshara, a constant movement and mutation in Time, a constant becoming. But this Nature is simply the executive power of the Soul itself ; for only by what he is, can she become; only according to the possibilities of his becoming, can she act ; she works out the becoming of his being. Her Karma is determined by Swabhava, the own-nature, the law of self-becoming of the soul, even though, because it is the agent and executive of the becoming, the action

rather seems often to determine the nature. According to what we are, we act, and by our action we develop, we work out what we are. Nature is the action, the mutation, the becoming, and it is the Power that executes all these ; but the Soul is the conscious Being from which that Power proceeds, from whose luminous stuff of consciousness she has drawn the variable will that changes and expresses its changes in her actions. And this Soul is One and Many ; it is the one Life-being out of which all life is constituted and it is all these living beings ; it is the cosmic Existent and it is all this multitude of cosmic existences, *sarvabhûtâni,* for all these are One ; all the many Purushas are in their original being the one and only Purusha. But the mechanism of the ego-sense in Nature, which is part of her action, induces the mind to identify the soul's consciousness with the limited becoming of the moment, with the sum of her active consciousness in a given field of space and time, with the result from moment to moment of the sum of her past actions. It is possible to realise in a way the unity of all these beings even in Nature herself and to become aware of a cosmic Soul which is manifest in the whole action of cosmic Nature, Nature manifesting the Soul, the Soul constituting the Nature. But this is to become aware only of the great cosmic Becoming, which is not false or unreal, but the knowledge of which alone does not give us the true knowledge of our Self ; for our true Self

is always something more than this and something beyond it.

For, beyond the soul manifest in Nature and bound up with its action, is another status of the Purusha, which is entirely a status and not at all an action ; that is the silent, the immutable, the all-pervading, self-existent, motionless Self, *sarvagatam achalam,* immutable Being and not Becoming, the Akshara. In the Kshara the Soul is involved in the action of Nature, therefore it is concentrated, loses itself, as it were, in the moments of Time, in the waves of the Becoming, not really, but only in appearance and by following the current: in the Akshara Nature falls to silence and rest in the Soul, therefore it becomes aware of its immutable Being. The Kshara is the Sankhya's Purusha when it reflects the varied workings of the gunas of Nature, and it knows itself as the Saguna, the Personal ; the Akshara is the Sankhya's Purusha when these gunas have fallen into a state of equilibrium, and it knows itself as the Nirguna, the Impersonal. Therefore while the Kshara, associating itself with the work of Prakriti, seems to be the doer of works, *kartâ,* the Akshara dissociated from all the workings of the gunas is the inactive non-doer, *akartâ,* and witness. The soul of man, when it takes the poise of the Kshara, identifies itself with the play of personality and readily clouds its self-knowledge with the ego-sense in Nature, so that he thinks of himself as the ego-doer of works ; when it takes its poise in the Akshara, it identifies itself with the Impersonal

and is aware of Nature as the doer and itself as the inactive witnessing Self, *akartâram*. The mind of man has to tend to one of these poises, it takes them as alternatives; it is bound by Nature to action in the mutations of quality and personality or it is free from her workings in immutable impersonality.

But these two, the status and immutability of the Soul and the action of the Soul and its mutability in Nature, actually coexist. And this would be an anomaly irreconcilable except by some such theory as that of Maya or else of a double and divided being, if there were not a supreme reality of the Soul's existence of which these are the two contrary aspects, but which is limited by neither of them. We have seen that the Gita finds this in the Purushottama. The supreme Soul is the Ishwara, God, the Master of all being, *sarvabhûta-maheshwara*. He puts forth his own active nature, his Prakriti,—*swâm prakr'itim*, says the Gita,—manifest in the Jiva, worked out by the *swabhâva*, "own-becoming", of each Jiva according to the law of the divine being in it, the great lines of which each Jiva must follow, but worked out too in the egoistic nature by the bewildering play of the three gunas upon each other, *gunâ guneshu vartante*. That is the *traigunyamayî mâyâ*, the Maya hard for man to get beyond, *duratyayâ*,—yet can one get beyond it by transcending the three gunas. For while all this is done by the Ishwara through his Nature-Power in the Kshara, in the Akshara he

is untouched, indifferent, regarding all equally, extended within all, yet above all. In all three he is the Lord, the supreme Ishwara in the highest, the presiding and all-pervading Impersonality, *prabhu* and *vibhu,* in the Akshara, and the immanent Will and present active Lord in the Kshara. He is free in his impersonality even while working out the play of his personality ; he is not either merely impersonal or personal, but one and the same being in two aspects ; he is the impersonal-personal, *nirguno gunî,* of the Upanishad. By him all has been willed even before it is worked out,—as he says of the still living Dhartrarashtrians "already have they been slain by Me" *mayâ nihatâh pûrvam eva,*—and the working out by Nature is only the result of his Will ; yet by virtue of his impersonality behind he is not bound by his works, *kartâram akartâram.*

But man as the individual self, owing to his ignorant self-identification with the work and the becoming, as if that were all his soul and not a power of his soul, a power proceeding from it, is bewildered by the ego-sense. He thinks that it is he and others who are doing all ; he does not see that Nature is doing all and that he is misrepresenting and disfiguring her works to himself by ignorance and attachment. He is enslaved by the gunas, now hampered in the dull case of tamas, now blown by the strong winds of rajas, now limited by the partial lights of sattwa, not distinguishing himself at all from the nature-mind

which alone is thus modified by the gunas. He is therefore mastered by pain and pleasure, happiness and grief, desire and passion, attachment and disgust: he has no freedom.

He must, to be free, get back from the Nature action to the status of the Akshara ; he will then be *trigunâtîta,* beyond the gunas. Knowing himself as the Akshara Brahman, the unchanging Purusha, he will know himself as an immutable impersonal self, the Atman, tranquilly observing and impartially supporting the action, but himself calm, indifferent, untouched, motionless, pure, one with all beings in their self, not one with Nature and her workings. This self, though by its presence authorising the works of Nature, though by its all-pervading existence supporting and consenting to them, *prabhu vibhu,* does not itself create works or the state of the doer or the joining of the works to their fruit, *na kartr'itvam na karmâni sr'ijati na karma-phala-sanyogam,* but only watches nature in the Kshara working out these things, *swabhâvas tu pravartate;* it accepts neither the sin nor the virtue of the living creatures born into this birth as its own, *nâdatte kasyachit pâpam na chaiva sukr'itam ;* it preserves its spiritual purity. It is the ego bewildered by ignorance which attributes these things to itself, because it assumes the responsibility of the doer and chooses to figure as that and not as the instrument of a greater power, which is all that it really is ; *ajnânenâvr'itam jnânam tena muhyanti jantavah.* By going back into the impersonal self the soul

gets back into a greater self-knowledge and is liberated from the bondage of the works of Nature, untouched by her gunas, free from her shows of good and evil, suffering and happiness. The natural being, the mind, body, life, still remain, Nature still works; but the inner being does not identify himself with these, nor while the gunas play in the natural being, does he rejoice or grieve. He is the calm and free immutable Self observing all.

Is this the last state, the utmost possibility, the highest secret? It cannot be, since this is a mixed or divided, not a perfectly harmonised status, a double, not a unified being, a freedom in the soul, an imperfection in the Nature. It can only be a stage. What then is there beyond it? One solution is that of the Sannyasin who rejects the nature, the action altogether, so far at least as action can be rejected, so that there may be an unmixed undivided freedom; but this solution, though admitted, is not preferred by the Gita. The Gita also insists on the giving up of actions, *sarva-karmâni sannyasya,* but inwardly to the Brahman. Brahman in the Kshara supports wholly the action of Prakriti, Brahman in the Akshara,. even while supporting, dissociates itself from the action, preserves its freedom; the individual soul, unified with the Brahman in the Akshara, is free and dissociated, yet, unified with the Brahman in the Kshara, supports but is not affected. This it can do best when it sees that both are aspects of the one Purushottama. The Purushot-

tama, inhabiting all existences as the secret Ishwara, controls the Nature and by his will, now no longer distorted and disfigured by the ego-sense, the Nature works out the actions by the swabhava ; the individual soul makes the divinised natural being an instrument of the divine Will, *nimitta-mâtram.* He remains even in action *trigunâtîta,* beyond the gunas, free from the gunas, *nistraigunya,* he fulfils entirely at last the early injunction of the Gita, *nistraigunyo bhavârjuna.* He is indeed still the enjoyer of the gunas, as is the Brahman, though not limited by them, *nirgunam gunabhoktr'i cha,* unattached, yet all-supporting, even as is that Brahman, *asaktam sarva-bhr'it :* but the action of the gunas within him is quite changed ; it is lifted above their egoistic character and reactions. For he has unified his whole being in the Purushottama, has assumed the divine being and the higher divine nature of becoming, *madbhâva,* has unified even his mind and natural consciousness with the Divine, *manmanâ machchittah.* This change is the final evolution of the nature and the consummation of the divine birth, *rahasyam uttamam.* When it is accomplished, the soul is aware of itself as the master of its nature and, grown a light of the divine Light and will of the divine Will, is able to change its natural workings into a divine action.

XXIII

NIRVANA AND WORKS IN THE WORLD

THE union of the soul with the Purushottama by a Yoga of the whole being is the complete teaching of the Gita and not only the union with the immutable Self as in the narrower doctrine which follows the exclusive way of knowledge. That is why the Gita subsequently, after it has effected the reconciliation of knowledge and works, is able to develop the idea of love and devotion, unified with both works and knowledge, as the highest height of the way to the supreme secret. For if the union with the immutable Self were the sole secret or the highest secret, that would not at all be possible ; for then at a given point our inner basis for love and devotion, no less than our inner foundation of works, would crumble away and collapse. Union utter and exclusive with the immutable Self alone means the abolition of the whole point of view of the mutable being, not only in its ordinary and inferior action but in its very roots, in all that makes its existence possible, not only in the works of its ignorance, but in the works of its knowledge. It would mean the abolition of all that difference in conscious poise and activity between the human soul and the Divine which makes possible the play of the Kshara ; for

the action of the Kshara would become then entirely a play of the ignorance without any root or basis of divine reality in it. On the contrary, union by Yoga with the Purushottama means the knowledge and enjoyment of our oneness with him in our self-existent being and of a certain differentiation in our active being. It is the persistence of the latter in a play of divine works which are urged by the motive power of divine love and constituted by a perfected divine Nature, it is the vision of the Divine in the world harmonised with a realisation of the Divine in the self which makes action and devotion possible to the liberated man, and not only possible but inevitable in the perfect mode of his being.

But the direct way to union lies through the firm realisation of the immutable Self, and it is the Gita's insistence on this as a first necessity, after which alone works and devotion can acquire their whole divine meaning, that makes it possible for us to mistake its drift. For if we take the passages in which it insists most rigorously upon this necessity and neglect to observe the whole sequence of thought in which they stand, we may easily come to the conclusion that it does really teach actionless absorption as the final state of the soul and action only as a preliminary means towards stillness in the motionless Immutable. It is in the close of the fifth and throughout the sixth chapter that this insistence is strongest and most comprehensive. There we get the description of a Yoga which would seem at first sight to be incompatible with works and we

get the repeated use of the word Nirvana to describe the status to which the Yogin arrives.

The mark of this status is the supreme peace of a calm self-extinction, *çântim nirvâna-paramâm,* and, as if to make it quite clear that it is not the Buddhist's Nirvana in a blissful negation of being, but the Vedantic loss of a partial in a perfect being that it intends, the Gita uses always the phrase *brahma-nirvâna,* extinction in the Brahman; and the Brahman here certainly seems to mean the Immutable, to denote primarily at least the inner timeless Self withdrawn from active participation even though immanent in the externality of Nature. We have to see then what is the drift of the Gita here, and especially whether this peace is the peace of an absolute inactive cessation, whether the self-extinction in the Akshara means the absolute excision of all knowledge and consciousness of the Kshara and of all action in the Kshara. We are accustomed indeed to regard Nirvana and any kind of existence and action in the world as incompatible and we might be inclined to argue that the use of the word is by itself sufficient and decides the question. But if we look closely at Buddhism, we shall doubt whether the absolute incompatibility really existed even for the Buddhists; and if we look closely at the Gita, we shall see that it does not form part of this supreme Vedantic teaching.

The Gita after speaking of the perfect equality of the Brahman-knower who has risen into the Brahman-consciousness, *brahmavid brahmani sthitah,*

develops in nine verses that follow its idea of Brahmayoga and of Nirvana in the Brahman. "When the soul is no longer attached to the touches of outward things," it begins, "then one finds the happiness that exists in the Self; such a one enjoys an imperishable happiness, because his self is in Yoga, *yukta,* by Yoga with the Brahman." The non-attachment is essential, it says, in order to be free from the attacks of desire and wrath and passion, a freedom without which true happiness is not possible. That happiness and that equality are to be gained entirely by man in the body: he is not to suffer any least remnant of the subjection to the troubled lower nature to remain in the idea that the perfect release will come by a putting off of the body; a perfect spiritual freedom is to be won here upon earth and possessed and enjoyed in the human life, *prâk çarîra-vimokshanât.* It then continues, "He who has the inner happiness and the inner ease and repose and the inner light, that Yogin becomes the Brahman and reaches self-extinction in the Brahman, *brahma-nirvânam.*" Here, very clearly, Nirvana means the extinction of the ego in the higher spiritual, inner Self, that which is for ever timeless, spaceless, not bound by the chain of cause and effect and the changes of the world-mutation; self-blissful, self-illumined and for ever at peace. The Yogin ceases to be the ego, the little person limited by the mind and the body; he becomes the Brahman; he is unified in consciousness with the immutable divinity of the

eternal Self which is immanent in his natural being.

But is this a going in into some deep sleep of samadhi away from all world-consciousness, or is it the preparatory movement for a dissolution of the natural being and the individual soul into some absolute Self who is utterly and for ever beyond Nature and her works, *laya, moksha?* Is that withdrawal necessary before we can enter into Nirvana, or is Nirvana, as the context seems to suggest, a state which can exist simultaneously with world-consciousness and even in its own way include it? Apparently the latter, for in the succeeding verse the Gita goes on to say, "Sages win Nirvana in the Brahman, they in whom the stains of sin are effaced and the knot of doubt is cut asunder, masters of their selves, who are occupied in doing good to all creatures, *sarva-bhûta-hite ratâh.*" That would almost seem to mean that to be thus is to be in Nirvana. But the next verse is quite clear and decisive, "*Yatis* (those who practise self-mastery by Yoga and austerity) who are delivered from desire and wrath and have gained self-mastery, for them Nirvana in the Brahman exists all about them, encompasses them, they already live in it because they have knowledge of the Self." That is to say, to have knowledge and possession of the self is to exist in Nirvana. This is clearly a large extension of the idea of Nirvana. Freedom from all stain of the passions, the self-mastery of the equal mind on which that freedom is founded, equality to all beings, *sarvabhûteshu,* and beneficial love for all,

final destruction of that doubt and obscurity of the ignorance which keeps us divided from the all-unifying Divine and the knowledge of the One Self within us and in all are evidently the conditions of Nirvana which are laid down in these verses of the Gita, go to constitute it and are its spiritual substance.

Thus Nirvana is clearly compatible with world-consciousness and with action in the world. For the sages who possess it are conscious of and in intimate relation by works with the Divine in the mutable universe ; they are occupied with the good of all creatures, *sarvabhûta-hite*. They have not renounced the experiences of the Kshara Purusha, they have divinised them ; for the Kshara, the Gita tells us, is all existences, *sarvabhûtâni,* and the doing universal good to all is a divine action in the mutability of Nature. This action in the world is not inconsistent with living in Brahman, it is rather its inevitable condition and outward result because the Brahman in whom we find Nirvana, the spiritual consciousness in which we lose the separative ego-consciousness, is not only within us but within all these existences, exists not only above and apart from all these universal happenings, but pervades them, contains them and is extended in them. Therefore by Nirvana in the Brahman must be meant a destruction or extinction of the limited separative consciousness, falsifying and dividing, which is brought into being on the surface of existence by the lower Maya of the three gunas, and

entry into Nirvana is a passage into this other true unifying consciousness which is the heart of existence and its continent and its whole containing and supporting, its whole original and eternal and final truth. Nirvana when we gain it, enter into it, is not only within us, but all around, *abhito-vartate,* because this is not only the Brahman-consciousness which lives secret within us, but the Brahman-consciousness in which we live. It is the Self which we are within, the supreme Self of our individual being but also the Self which we are without, the supreme Self of the universe, the self of all existences. By living in that self we live in all, and no longer in our egoistic being alone; by oneness with that self a steadfast oneness with all in the universe becomes the very nature of our being and the root status of our active consciousness and root motive of all our action.

But again we get immediately afterwards two verses which might seem to lead away from this conclusion. "Having put outside of himself all outward touches and concentrated the vision between the eyebrows and made equal the *prâna* and the *apâna* moving within the nostrils, having controlled the senses, the mind and the understanding, the sage devoted to liberation, from whom desire and wrath and fear have passed away is ever free." Here we have a process of Yoga that brings in an element which seems quite other than the Yoga of works and other even than the pure Yoga of knowledge by discrimination and contemplation; it belongs in

all its characteristic features to the system, introduces the psycho-physical askesis of Rajayoga. There is the conquest of all the movements of the mind, *chittavritti-nirodha ;* there is the control of the breathing, Pranayama ; there is the drawing in of the sense and the vision. All of them are processes which lead to the inner trance of Samadhi, the object of all of them *moksha,* and *moksha* signifies in ordinary parlance the renunciation not only of the separative ego-consciousness, but of the whole active consciousness, a dissolution of our being into the highest Brahman. Are we to suppose that the Gita give this process in that sense as the last movement of a release by dissolution or only as a special means and a strong aid to overcome the outward-going mind? Is this the finale, the climax, the last word? We shall find reason to regard it as both a special means, an aid, and at least one gate of a final departure, not by dissolution, but by an uplifting to the supracosmic existence. For even here in this passage this is not the last word ; the last word, the finale, the climax comes in a verse that follows and is the last couplet of the chapter. "When a man has known Me as the Enjoyer of sacrifice and tapasya (of all askesis and energisms), the mighty lord of all the worlds, the friend of all creatures, he comes by the peace." The power of the Karmayoga comes in again ; the knowledge of the active Brahman, the cosmic supersoul, is insisted on among the conditions of the peace of Nirvana.

We get back to the great idea of the Gita, the

idea of the Purushottama,—though that name is not given till close upon the end, it is always that which Krishna means by his "I" and "Me", the Divine who is there as the one self in our timeless immutable being, who is present too in the world, in all existences, in all activities, the master of the silence and the peace, the master of the power and the action, who is here incarnate as the divine charioteer of the stupendous conflict, the Transcendent, the Self, the All, the master of every individual being. He is the enjoyer of all sacrifice and of all tapasya, therefore shall the seeker of liberation do works as a sacrifice and as a tapasya; he is the lord of all the worlds, manifested in Nature and in these beings, therefore shall the liberated man still do works for the right government and leading on of the peoples in these worlds, *loka-sangraha;* he is the friend of all existences, therefore is the sage who has found Nirvana within him and all around, still and always occupied with the good of all creatures,—even as the Nirvana of Mahayana Buddhism took for its highest sign the works of a universal compassion. Therefore too, even when he has found oneness with the Divine in his timeless and immutable self, is he still capable, since he embraces the relations also of the play of Nature, of divine love for man and of love for the Divine, of bhakti.

That this is the drift of the meaning, becomes clearer when we have fathomed the sense of the sixth chapter which is a large comment on and a

full development of the idea of these closing verses of the fifth,—that shows the importance which the Gita attaches to them. We shall therefore run as briefly as possible through the substance of this sixth chapter. First the Teacher emphasises—and this is very significant—his often repeated asseveration about the real essence of Sannyasa, that it is an inward, not an outward renunciation. "Whoever does the work to be done without resort to its fruits, he is the Sannyasin and the Yogin, not the man who lights not the sacrificial fire and does not the works. What they have called renunciation (Sannyasa), know to be in truth Yoga; for none becomes a Yogin who has not renounced the desire-will in the mind." Works are to be done, but with what purpose and in what order? They are first to be done while ascending the hill of Yoga, for then works are the cause, *kâranam*. The cause of what? The cause of self-perfection, of liberation, of nirvana in the Brahman; for by doing works with a steady practice of the inner renunciation this perfection, this liberation, this conquest of the desire-mind and the Yoga-self and the lower nature are easily accomplished.

But when one has got to the top? Then works are no longer the cause; the calm of self-mastery and self-possession gained by works becomes the cause. Again, the cause of what? Of fixity in the Self, in the Brahman-consciousness and of the perfect equality in which the divine works of the liberated man are done. "For when one does not get

attached to the objects of sense or to works and has renounced all will of desire in the mind, then is he said to have ascended to the top of Yoga." That, as we know already, is the spirit in which the liberated man does works; he does them without desire and attachment, without the egoistic personal will and the mental seeking which is the parent of desire. He has conquered his lower self, reached the perfect calm in which his highest self is manifest to him, that highest self always concentrated in its own being, *samâhita,* in Samadhi, not only in the trance of the inward-drawn consciousness, but always, in the waking state of the mind as well, in exposure to the causes of desire and of the disturbance of calm, to grief and pleasure, heat and cold, honour and disgrace, all the dualities, *çîtoshna-sukhaduhkheshu tathâ mânâpamânayoh.* This higher self is the Akshara, *kûtastha,* which stands above the changes and the perturbations of the natural being; and the Yogin is said to be in Yoga with it when he also is like it, *kûtastha,* when he is superior to all appearances and mutations, when he is satisfied with self-knowledge, when he is equal-minded to all things and happenings and persons.

But this Yoga is after all no easy thing to acquire, as Arjuna indeed shortly afterwards suggests, for the restless mind is always liable to be pulled down from these heights by the attacks of outward things and to fall back into the strong control of grief and passion and inequality.

Therefore, it would seem, the Gita proceeds to give us in addition to its general method of knowledge and works a special process of Rajayogic meditation also, a powerful method of practice, *abhyâsa,* a strong way to the complete control of the mind and all its workings. In this process the Yogin is directed to practise continually union with the Self so that that may become his normal consciousness. He is to sit apart and alone, with all desire and idea of passion banished from his mind, self-controlled in his whole being and consciousness. "He should set in a pure spot his firm seat, neither too high, nor yet too low, covered with a cloth, with a deer-skin, with sacred grass, and there seated with a concentrated mind and with the workings of the mental consciousness and the senses under control he should practise Yoga for self-purification, *âtma-viçuddhaye.*" The posture he takes must be the motionless erect posture proper to the practice of Rajayoga ; the vision should be drawn in and fixed between the eye-brows, " not regarding the regions." The mind is to be kept calm and free from fear and the vow of Brahmacharya observed ; the whole controlled mentality must be devoted and turned to the Divine so that the lower action of the consciousness shall be merged in the higher peace. For the object to be attained is the still peace of Nirvana. "Thus always putting himself in Yoga by control of his mind the Yogin attains to the supreme peace of Nirvana which has its foundation in Me, *çântim nirvâna-paramâm matsansthâm.*"

This peace of Nirvana is reached when all the mental consciousness is perfectly controlled and liberated from desire and remains still in the Self, when, motionless like the light of a lamp in a windless place, it ceases from its restless action, shut in from its outward motion, and by the silence and stillness of the mind the Self is seen within, not disfigured as in the mind, but in the Self, seen, not as it is mistranslated falsely or partially by the mind and represented to us through the ego, but self-perceived by the Self, *swaprakâsha*. Then the soul is satisfied and knows its own true and exceeding bliss, not that untranquil happiness which is the portion of the mind and the senses, but an inner and serene felicity in which it is safe from the mind's perturbations and can no longer fall away from the spiritual truth of its being. Not even the fieriest assault of mental grief can disturb it; for mental grief comes to us from outside, is a reaction to external touches, and this is the inner, the self-existent happiness of those who no longer accept the slavery of the unstable mental reactions to external touches. It is the putting away of the contact with pain, the divorce of the mind's marriage with grief, *duhkha-sanyoga-viyogam*. The firm winning of this inalienable spiritual bliss is Yoga, it is the divine union; it is the greatest of all gains and the treasure beside which all others lose their value. Therefore is this Yoga to be resolutely practised without yielding to any discouragement by difficulty or failure until the release, until the

bliss of Nirvana is secured as an eternal possession.

The main stress here has fallen on the stilling of the emotive mind, the mind of desire and the senses which are the recipients of outward touches and reply to them with our customary emotional reactions; but even the mental thought has to be stilled in the silence of the self-existent being. First, all the desires born of the desire-will have to be wholly abandoned without any exception or residue and the senses have to be held in by the mind so that they shall not run out to all sides after their usual disorderly and restless habit; but next the mind itself has to be seized by the buddhi and drawn inward. One should slowly cease from mental action by a buddhi held in the grasp of fixity and having fixed the mind in the higher self one should not think of anything at all. Whenever the restless and unquiet mind goes forth, it should be controlled and brought into subjection in the Self. When the mind is thoroughly quieted, then there comes upon the Yogin, the highest, stainless, passionless bliss of the soul that has become the Brahman. "Thus freed from stain of passion and putting himself constantly into Yoga, the Yogin easily and happily enjoys the touch of the Brahman which is an exceeding bliss."

And yet the result is not, while one yet lives, a Nirvana which puts away every possibility of action in the world, every relation with beings in the world. It would seem at first that it ought to be so. When all the desires and passions have

ceased, when the mind is no longer permitted to throw itself out in thought, when the practice of this silent and solitary Yoga has become the rule, what farther action or relation with the world of outward touches and mutable appearances is any longer possible? No doubt, the Yogin for a time still remains in the body, but the cave, the forest, the mountain-top seem now the fittest, the only possible scene of his continued living and constant trance of Samadhi his sole joy and occupation. But, first, while this solitary Yoga is being pursued, the renunciation of all other action is not recommended by the Gita. This Yoga, it says, is not for the man who gives up sleep and food and play and action, even as it is not for those who indulge too much in these things of the life and the body ; but the sleep and waking, the food, the play, the putting forth of effort in works should all be *yukta*. This is generally interpreted as meaning that all should be moderate, regulated, done in fit measure, and that may indeed be the significance. But at any rate when the Yoga is attained, all this has to be *yukta* in another sense, the ordinary sense of the word everywhere else in the Gita. In all states, in waking and in sleeping, in food and play and action, the Yogin will then be in Yoga with the Divine, and all will be done by him in the consciousness of the Divine as the self and as the All and as that which supports and contains his own life and his action. Desire and ego and personal will and the thought of the mind are the

motives of action only in the lower nature; when the ego is lost and the Yogin becomes Brahman, when he lives in and is, even, a transcendent and universal consciousness, action comes spontaneously out of that, luminous knowledge higher than the mental thought comes out of that, a power other and mightier than the personal will comes out of that to do for him his works and bring its fruits: personal action has ceased, all has been taken up into the Brahman and assumed by the Divine, *mayi sannyasya karmâni.*

For when the Gita describes the nature of this self-realisation and the result of the Yoga* which comes by Nirvana of the separative ego-mind and its motives of thought and feeling and action into the Brahman-consciousness, it includes the cosmic sense, though lifted into a new kind of vision. "The man whose self is in Yoga, sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self, he sees all with an equal vision." All that he sees is to him the Self, all is his self, all is the Divine. But is there no danger, if he dwells at all in the mutability of the Kshara, of his losing all the results of this difficult Yoga, losing the Self and falling back into the mind, of the Divine losing him and the world getting him, of his losing the Divine and getting back in its place the ego and the lower nature? No, says the Gita; "he who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, to him I do not get lost, nor does he get lost to Me."

* *Yoga-kshema vahâmyaham.*

For this peace of Nirvana, though it is gained through the Akshara, is founded upon the being of the Purushottama, *mat-sansthâm,* and that is extended, the Divine, the Brahman is extended too in the world of beings and, though transcendent of it, not imprisoned in its own transcendence. One has to see all things as He and live and act wholly in that vision ; that is the perfect fruit of the Yoga.

But why act? Is it not safer to sit in one's solitude looking out upon the world, if you will, seeing it in Brahman, in the Divine, but not taking part in it, not moving in it, not living in it, not acting in it, living rather ordinarily in the inner Samadhi? Should not that be the law, the rule, the dharma of this highest spiritual condition? No, again ; for the liberated Yogin there is no other law, rule, dharma than simply this, to live in the Divine and love the Divine and be one with all beings ; his freedom is an absolute and not a contingent freedom, self-existent and not dependent any longer on any rule of conduct, law of life or limitation of any kind. He has no longer any need of a process of Yoga, because he is now perpetually in Yoga. "The Yogin who has taken his stand upon oneness and loves Me in all beings, however and in all ways he lives and acts, lives and acts in Me." The love of the world spiritualised, changed from a sense-experience to a soul-experience, is founded on the love of God and in that love there is no peril and no shortcoming. Fear and disgust of the world may often be necessary for the recoil

from the lower nature, for it is really the fear and disgust of our own ego which reflects itself in the world. But to see God in the world is to fear nothing, it is to embrace all in the being of God; to see all as the Divine is to hate and loathe nothing, but love God in the world and the world in God.

But at least the things of the lower nature will be shunned and feared, the things which the Yogin has taken so much trouble to surmount? Not this either; all is embraced in the equality of the self-vision. "He, O Arjuna, who sees with equality everything in the image of the Self whether it be grief or it be happiness, him I hold to be the supreme Yogin." And by this it is not meant at all that he himself shall fall from the griefless spiritual bliss and feel again worldly unhappiness, even in the sorrow of others, but seeing in others the play of the dualities which he himself has left and surmounted, he shall still see all as himself, his self in all, God in all and, not disturbed or bewildered by the appearances of these things, moved only by them to help and heal, to occupy himself with the good of all beings, to lead men to the spiritual bliss, to work for the progress of the world Godwards, he shall live the divine life, so long as days upon earth are his portion. The God-lover who can do this, can thus embrace all things in God, can look calmly on the lower nature and the works of the Maya of the three gunas and act in them and upon them without perturbation or fall or disturbance from the height and power of the spiritual oneness,

free in the largeness of the God-vision, sweet and great and luminous in the strength of the God-nature, may well be declared to be the supreme Yogin. He indeed has conquered the creation, *jitah sargah.*

The Gita brings in here as always bhakti as the climax of the Yoga, *sarvabhûtasthitam yo mâm bhajati ekatwam âsthitah ;* that may almost be said to sum up the whole final result of the Gita's teaching—whoever loves God in all and his soul is founded upon the divine oneness, however he lives and acts, lives and acts in God. And to emphasise it still more, after an intervention of Arjuna and a reply to his doubt as to how so difficult a Yoga can be at all possible for the restless mind of man, the divine Teacher returns to this idea and makes it his culminating utterance. "The Yogin is greater than the doers of askesis, greater than the men of knowledge, greater than the men of works ; become then the Yogin, O Arjuna," the Yogin, one who seeks for and attains, by works and knowledge and askesis or by whatever other means, not even spiritual knowledge or power or anything else for their own sake, but the union with God alone ; for in that all else is contained and in that lifted beyond itself to a divinest significance. But even among Yogins the greatest is the Bhakta. "Of all Yogins he who with all his inner self given up to Me, for Me has love and faith, *çraddhâvân bhajate,* him I hold to be the most united with Me in Yoga." It is this that is the closing word of these first six chapters

and contains in itself the seed of the rest, of that which still remains unspoken and is nowhere entirely spoken ; for it is always and remains something of a mystery and a secret, *rahasyam,* the highest spiritual mystery and the divine secret.

XXIV

THE GIST OF THE KARMAYOGA

THE first six chapters of the Gita form a sort of preliminary block of the teaching; all the rest, all the other twelve chapters are the working out of certain unfinished figures in this block which here are seen only as hints behind the large-size execution of the main motives, yet are in themselves of capital importance and are therefore reserved for a yet larger treatment on the other two faces of the work. If the Gita were not a great written Scripture which must be carried to its end, if it were actually a discourse by a living teacher to a disciple which could be resumed in good time, when the disciple was ready for farther truth, one could conceive of his stopping here at the end of the sixth chapter and saying, "Work this out first, there is plenty for you to do to realise it and you have the largest possible basis; as difficulties arise, they will solve themselves or I will solve them for you. But at present live out what I have told you; work in this spirit." True, there are many things here which cannot be properly understood except in the light thrown on them by what is to come after. In order to clear up immediate difficulties and obviate possible misunderstandings, I have had my-

self to anticipate a good deal, to bring in repeatedly, for example, the idea of the Purushottama, for without that it would have been impossible to clear up certain obscurities about the Self and action and the Lord of action, which the Gita deliberately accepts so that it may not disturb the firmness of the first steps by reaching out prematurely to things too great as yet for the mind of the human disciple.

Arjuna, himself, if the Teacher were to break off his discourse here, might well object; "You have spoken much of the destruction of desire and attachment, of equality, of the conquest of the senses and the stilling of the mind, of passionless and impersonal action, of the sacrifice of works, of the inner as preferable to the outer renunciation, and these things I understand intellectually, however difficult they may appear to me in practice. But you have also spoken of rising above the gunas, while yet one remains in action, and you have not told me how the gunas work, and unless I know that, it will be difficult for me to detect and rise above them. Besides, you have spoken of bhakti as the greatest element in Yoga, yet you have talked much of works and knowledge, but very little or nothing of bhakti. And to whom is bhakti, this greatest thing, to be offered? Not to the still impersonal Self, certainly, but to you, the Lord. Tell me, then, what you are, who, as bhakti is greater even than this self-knowledge, are greater than the immutable Self, which is yet itself greater than mutable Nature and the world of action, even

as knowledge is greater than works. What is the relation between these three things? between works and knowledge and divine love? between the soul in Nature and the immutable Self and that which is at once the changeless Self of all and the Master of knowledge and love and works, the supreme Divinity who is here with me in this great battle and massacre, my charioteer in the chariot of this fierce and terrible action?" It is to answer these questions that the rest of the Gita is written, and in a complete intellectual solution they have indeed to be taken up without delay and resolved. But in actual *sâdhanâ* one has to advance from stage to stage, leaving many things, indeed the greatest things to arise subsequently and solve themselves fully by the light of the advance we have made in spiritual experience. The Gita follows to a certain extent this curve of experience and puts first a sort of large preliminary basis of works and knowledge which contains an element leading up to bhakti and to a greater knowledge, but not yet fully arriving. The six chapters present us with that basis.

We may then pause to consider how far they have carried the solution of the original problem with which the Gita started. The problem in itself, it may be useful again to remark, need not necessarily have led up to the whole question of the nature of existence and of the replacement of the normal by the spiritual life. It might have been dealt with on a pragmatical or an ethical basis

or from an intellectual or an ideal standpoint or by a consideration of all of these together; that in fact would have been our modern method of solving the difficulty. By itself it raises in the first instance just this question, whether Arjuna should be governed by the ethical sense of personal sin in slaughter or by the consideration equally ethical of his public and social duty, the defence of the Right, the opposition demanded by conscience from all noble natures to the armed forces of injustice and oppression? That question has been raised in our own time and the present hour, and it can be solved, as we solve it now, by one or other of very various solutions, but all from the standpoint of our normal life and our normal human mind. It may be answered as a question between the personal conscience and our duty to the society and the State, between an ideal and a practical morality, between "soul-force" and the recognition of the troublesome fact that life is not yet at least all soul and that to take up arms for the right in a physical struggle is sometimes inevitable. All these solutions are, however, intellectual, temperamental, emotional; they depend upon the individual standpoint and are at the best our own proper way of meeting the difficulty offered to us, proper because suitable to our nature and the stage of our ethical and intellectual evolution, the best we can, with the light we have, see and do; it leads to no final solution. And this is so because it proceeds from the normal mind which is always a tangle of various

tendencies of our being and can only arrive at a choice or an accommodation between them, between our reason, our ethical being, our dynamic needs, our life-instincts, our emotional being and those rarer movements which we may perhaps call soul-instincts or psychical preferences. The Gita recognises that from this standpoint there can be no absolute, only an immediate practical solution and, after offering to Arjuna from the highest ideals of his age just such a practical solution, which he is in no mood to accept and indeed is evidently not intended to accept, it proceeds to quite a different standpoint and to quite another answer.

The Gita's solution is to rise above our natural being and normal mind, above our intellectual and ethical perplexities into another consciousness with another law of being and therefore another standpoint for our action; where personal desire and personal emotions no longer govern it; where the dualities fall away; where the action is no longer our own and where therefore the sense of personal virtue and personal sin is exceeded; where the universal, the impersonal, the divine spirit works out through us its purpose in the world; where we are ourselves by a new and divine birth changed into being of that Being, consciousness of that Consciousness, power of that Power, bliss of that Bliss, and, living no longer in our lower nature, have no works to do of our own, no personal aim to pursue of our own, but if we do works at all,—and that is the one real problem and difficulty left,

—do only the divine works, those of which our outward nature is only a passive instrument and no longer the cause, no longer provides the motive; for the motive-power is above us in the will of the Master of our works. And this is presented to us as the true solution, because it goes back to the real truth of our being and to live according to the real truth of our being is evidently the highest solution and the sole entirely true solution of the problems of our existence. Our mental and vital personality is a truth of our natural existence, but a truth of the ignorance, and all that attaches itself to it is also truth of that order, practically valid for the works of the ignorance, but no longer valid when we get back to the real truth of our being. But how can we actually be sure that this is the truth? We cannot so long as we remain satisfied with our ordinary mental experience; for our normal mental experience is wholly that of this lower nature full of the ignorance. We can only know this greater truth by living it, that is to say, by passing beyond the mental into the spiritual experience, by Yoga. For the living out of spiritual experience until we cease to be mind and become spirit, until, liberated from the imperfections of our present nature, we are able to live entirely in our true and divine being is what in the end we mean by Yoga.

This upward transference of our centre of being and the consequent transformation of our whole existence and consciousness, with a resultant change

in the whole spirit and motive of our action, the action often remaining precisely the same in all its outward appearances, makes the gist of the Gita's Karmayoga. Change your being, be reborn into the spirit and by that new birth proceed with the action to which the Spirit within has appointed you, may be said to be the heart of its message. Or again, put otherwise, with a deeper and more spiritual import,—make the work you have to do here your means of inner spiritual rebirth, the divine birth, and, having become divine, do still divine works as an instrument of the Divine for the leading of the peoples. Therefore there are here two things which have to be clearly laid down and clearly grasped, the way to the change, to this upward transference, this new divine birth, and the nature of the work or rather the spirit in which it has to be done, since the outward form of it need not at all change, although really its scope and aim become quite different. But these two things are practically the same, for the elucidation of one elucidates the other. The spirit of our action arises from the nature of our being and the inner foundation it has taken, but also this nature is itself affected by the trend and spiritual effect of our action ; a very great change in the spirit of our works changes the nature of our being and alters the foundation it has taken ; it shifts the centre of conscious force from which we act. If life and action were entirely illusory, as some would have it, if the Spirit had nothing to do with works or life, this would not be so ; but the soul in

us develops itself by life and works and, not indeed so much the action itself, but the way of our soul's inner force of working determines its relations to the Spirit. This is, indeed, the justification of Karmayoga as a practical means of the higher self-realisation.

We start from this foundation that the present inner life of man, almost entirely dependent as it is upon his vital and physical nature, only lifted beyond it by a limited play of mental energy, is not the whole of his possible existence, not even the whole of his present real existence. There is within him a hidden Self, of which his present nature is either only an outer appearance or is a partial dynamic result. The Gita seems throughout to admit its dynamic reality and not to adopt the severer view of the extreme Vedantists that it is only an appearance, a view which strikes at the very roots of all works and action. Its way of formulating this element of its philosophical thought,—it might be done in a different way,—is to admit the Sankhya distinction between the Soul and Nature, the power that knows, supports and informs and the power that works, acts, provides all the variations of instrument, medium and process. Only it takes the free and immutable Soul of the Sankhyas, calls it in Vedantic language the one immutable omnipresent Self or Brahman, and distinguishes it from this other soul involved in Nature, which is our mutable and dynamic being, the multiple soul of things, the basis of variation

and personality. But in what then consists this action of Nature?

It consists in a power of process, Prakriti, which is the interplay of three fundamental modes of its working, three qualities, gunas. And what is the medium? It is the complex system of existence created by a graded evolution of the instruments of Prakriti, which, as they are reflected here in the soul's experience of her workings, we may call successively the reason and the ego, the mind, the senses and the elements of material energy which are the basis of its forms. These are all mechanical, a complex engine of Nature, *yantra ;* and from our modern point of view we may say that they are all involved in material energy and manifest themselves in it as the soul in Nature becomes aware of itself by an upward evolution of each instrument, but in the inverse order to that which we have stated, matter first, then sensation, then mind, next reason, last spiritual consciousness. Reason, which is at first only preoccupied with the workings of Nature, may then detect their ultimate character, may see them only as a play of the three gunas in which the soul is entangled, may distinguish between the soul and these workings ; then the soul gets a chance of disentangling itself and of going back to its original freedom and immutable existence. In Vedantic language, it sees the spirit, the being ; it ceases to identify itself with the instruments and workings of Nature, with its becoming ; it identifies itself with its true Self and being and recovers its immutable

spiritual self-existence. It is then from this spiritual self-existence, according to the Gita, that it can freely and as the master of its being, the Ishwara, support the action of its becoming.

Looking only at the psychological facts on which these philosophical distinctions are founded,—philosophy is only a way of formulating to ourselves intellectually in their essential significance the psychological and physical facts of existence and their relation to any ultimate reality that may exist,—we may say that there are two lives we can lead, the life of the soul engrossed in the workings of its active nature, identified with its psychological and physical instruments, limited by them, bound by its personality, subject to Nature, and the life of the Spirit, superior to these things, large, impersonal, universal, free, unlimited, transcendent, supporting with an infinite equality its natural being and action, but exceeding them by its freedom and infinity. We may live in what is now our natural being or we may live in our greater and spiritual being. This is the first great distinction on which the Karmayoga of the Gita is founded.

The whole question and the whole method lie then in the liberation of the soul from the limitations of our present natural being. In our natural life the first dominating fact is our subjection to the forms of material Nature, the outward touches of things. These present themselves to our life through the senses, and the life through the senses immediately returns upon these objects

to seize upon them and deal with them, desires, attaches itself, seeks for results. The mind in all its inner sensations, reactions, emotions, habitual ways of perceiving, thinking and feeling obeys this action of the senses; the reason too carried away by the mind gives itself up to this life of the senses, this life in which the inner being is subject to the externality of things and cannot for a moment really get above it or outside the circle of its action upon us and its psychological results and reactions within us. It cannot get beyond them because there is the principle of ego by which the reason differentiates the sum of the action of Nature upon our mind, will, sense, body from her action in other minds, wills, nervous organisms, bodies; and life to us means only the way she affects our ego and the way our ego replies to her touches. We know nothing else, we seem to be nothing else; the soul itself seems then only a separate mass of mind, will, emotional and nervous reception and reaction. We may enlarge our ego, identify ourselves with the family, clan, class, country, nation, humanity even, but still the ego remains in all these disguises the root of our actions, only it finds a larger satisfaction of its separate being by these wider dealings with external things.

What acts in us is still the will of the natural being seizing upon the touches of the external world to satisfy the different phases of its personality, and the will in this seizing is always a will of desire and passion and attachment to our works and their

results, the will of Nature in us ; our personal will, we say, but our ego personality is a creation of Nature, it is not and cannot be our free self, our independent being. The whole is the action of the modes of Nature. It may be a tamasic action, and then we have an inert personality subject to and satisfied with the mechanical round of things, incapable of any strong effort at a freer action and mastery. Or it may be the rajasic action, and then we have the restless active personality which throws itself upon Nature and tries to make her serve its needs and desires, but does not see that its apparent mastery is a servitude, since its needs and desires are those of Nature, and while we are subject to them, there can be for us no freedom. Or it may be a sattwic action, and then we have the enlightened personality which tries to live by reason or to realise some preferred ideal of good, truth or beauty ; but this reason is still subject to the appearances of Nature and these ideals are only changing phases of our personality in which we find in the end no sure rule or permanent satisfaction. We are still carried on a wheel of mutation, obeying in our circlings through the ego some Power within us and within all this, but not ourselves that Power or in union and communion with it. Still there is no freedom, no real mastery.

Yet freedom is possible. For that we have to get first away into ourselves from the action of the external world upon our senses ; that is to say, we have to live inwardly and be able to hold back the

natural running of the senses after their external objects. A mastery of the senses, an ability to do without all that they hanker after, is the first condition of the true soul-life ; only so can we begin to feel that there is a soul within us which is other than the mutations of mind in its reception of the touches of outward things, a soul which in its depths goes back to something self-existent, immutable, tranquil, self-possessed, grandiose, serene and august, master of itself and unaffected by the eager runnings of our external nature. But this cannot be done so long as we are subject to desire. For it is desire, the principle of all our superficial life, which satisfies itself with the life of the senses and finds its whole account in the play of the passions. We must get rid then of desire and, that propensity of our natural being destroyed, the passions which are its emotional results will fall into quietude ; for the joy and grief of possession and of loss, success and failure, pleasant and unpleasant touches, which entertain them, will pass out of our souls. A calm equality will then be gained. And since we have still to live and act in the world and our nature in works is to seek for the fruits of our works, we must change that nature and do works without attachment to their fruits, otherwise desire and all its results remain. But how can we change this nature of the doer of works in us? By dissociating works from ego and personality, by seeing through the reason that all this is only the play of the gunas of Nature, and by dissociating our soul from the play, by

making it first of all the observer of the workings of Nature and leaving those works to the Power that is really behind them, the something in Nature which is greater than ourselves, not our personality, but the Master of the universe. But the mind will not permit all this; its nature is to run out after the senses and carry the reason and will with it. Then we must learn to still the mind. We must attain that absolute peace and stillness in which we become aware of the calm, motionless, blissful Self within us which is eternally untroubled and unaffected by the touches of things, is sufficient to itself and finds there alone its eternal satisfaction.

This Self is our self-existent being. It is not limited by our personal existence. It is the same in all existences, pervasive, equal to all things, supporting the whole universal action with its infinity, but unlimited by all that is finite, unmodified by the changings of Nature and personality. When this Self is revealed within us, when we feel its peace and stillness, we can grow into that; we can transfer the poise of our soul from its lower immergence in Nature and draw it back into the Self. We can do this by the force of the things we have attained, calm, equality, passionless impersonality. For as we grow in these things, carry them to their fullness, subject all our nature to them, we are growing into this calm, equal, passionless, impersonal, all-pervading Self. Our senses fall into that stillness and receive the touches of the world on us with a supreme tranquillity; our mind falls into stillness

and becomes the calm, universal witness; our ego dissolves itself into this impersonal existence. All things we see in this self which we have become in ourself; and we see this self in all; we become one being with all beings in the spiritual basis of their existence. By doing works in this selfless tranquillity and impersonality, our works cease to be ours, cease to bind or trouble us with their reactions. Nature and her gunas weave the web of her works, but without affecting our griefless self-existent tranquillity. All is given up into that one equal and universal Brahman.

But here there are two difficulties. First, there seems to be an antinomy between this tranquil and immutable Self and the action of Nature. How then does the action at all exist or how can it continue once we have entered into the immutable Self-existence? Where in that is the will to works which would make the action of our nature possible? If we say with the Sankhya that the will is in Nature and not in the Self, still there must be a motive in Nature and the power in her to draw the soul into its workings by interest, ego and attachment, and when these things cease to reflect themselves in the soul consciousness, her power ceases and the motive of works ceases with it. But the Gita does not accept this view, which seems indeed to necessitate the existence of many purushas and not one universal Purusha, otherwise the separate experience of the soul and its separate liberation while millions of others are still involved, would not

be intelligible. Nature is not a separate principle, but the power of the Supreme going forth in cosmic creation. But if the Supreme is only this immutable Self and the individual is only something that has gone forth from him in the Power, then the moment it returns and takes its poise in the self, everything must cease except the supreme unity and the supreme calm. Secondly, even if in some mysterious way action still continues, yet since the Self is equal to all things, it cannot matter whether works are done or, if they are done, it cannot matter what work is done. Why then this insistence on the most violent and disastrous form of action, this chariot, this battle, this warrior, this divine charioteer?

The Gita answers by presenting the Supreme as something greater even than the immutable Self, more comprehensive, one who is at once this Self and the Master of works in Nature. But he directs the works of Nature with the eternal calm, the equality, the superiority to works and personality which belong to the immutable. This, we may say, is the poise of being from which he directs works, and by growing into this we are growing into his being and into the poise of divine works. From this he goes forth as the Will and Power of his being in Nature, manifests himself in all existences, is born as Man in the world, is there in the heart of all men, reveals himself as the Avatar, the divine birth in man; and as man grows into his being, it is into the divine birth that he grows. Works must

be done as a sacrifice to this Lord of our works, and we must by growing into the Self realise our oneness with him in our being and see our personality as a partial manifestation of him in Nature. One with him in being, we grow one with all beings in the universe and do divine works, not as ours, but as his workings through us for the maintenance and leading of the peoples.

This is the essential thing to be done, and once this is done, the difficulties which present themselves to Arjuna will disappear. The problem is no longer one of our personal action, for that which makes our personality becomes a thing temporal and subordinate, the question is then only one of the workings of the divine Will through us in the universe. To understand that we must know what this supreme Being is in himself and in Nature, what the workings of Nature are and what they lead to, and the intimate relation between the soul in Nature and this supreme Soul, of which bhakti with knowledge is the foundation. The elucidation of these questions is the subject of the rest of the Gita.